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# The Female Castration Complex and Its Repercussions in Modesty, Appearance and Courtship Etiquette

by

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Although Freud used in his documentation many data not obtained in the course of analyses, the use of extra-analytic data for the demonstration of dynamic processes is, today, the exception rather than a commonplace procedure. This must be viewed as self constricting overmeticulousness, since occasionally one hears of daily occurrences which reveal quite deep unconscious material.

The documentation of the present article was primarily obtained in analytic situations, though not necessarily by the present writer. The remaining illustrative data were obtained under conditions comparable to the manner in which an anthropological field worker obtains new data while listening to a conversation between members of the native village which he is studying and therefore have the same validity as anthropological data obtained by these means. Data having this type and degree of validity are perfectly suitable for the documentation of an article which only seeks to clarify conscious and unconscious *attitudes* and does not attempt to ascertain the course of *actual events*. Thus, as regards Case 12, what matters is not whether one of a group of psychiatrists joking about a woman colleague *actually hallucinated* that this woman's vagina dentata was armed only with a dental plate; what matters is that he did joke about that possibility,

thereby revealing certain of his unconscious fantasies about the female sex organ.

It is the thesis of the present note that - as a result of the female castration complex - women view their genitalia as defective and repulsive and that one of the functions of foreplay, as well as of courtship, is to reassure them on this point. Sometimes the woman's sense of her genital "repulsiveness" is also extended to the secondary erotogeneous zones, so that the reassurance offered by the male must concern these secondary zones, rather than the female genitalia. If this reassurance is forthcoming, in a manner which is actually convincing, it usually suffices to overcome "modesty."

*Case 1:* A witty Frenchman, who was something of a Don Juan, remarked that unattractive - and therefore virginal - middle aged women are very hard to seduce, because, "fearing that they may not be able to 'fall' gracefully, they prefer not to 'fall' at all." (Overheard at a party.)

*Case 2:* An American college student analysand courted a divorcee, who allowed him to "proposition" her quite frankly, but refused to yield to his entreaties. One day, as he was again begging her to yield herself to him, she replied: "Your courtship is rather ill timed today; I am menstruating." When the young man replied that this did not disturb him in the least and that, as a matter of fact, this was an exceptionally good moment for making love, since it meant that they would not have to use contraceptives, the woman - whom he had been courting in vain for many weeks - yielded to him at once.

*Case 3:* A college girl analysand had been repeatedly humiliated by her first lover's refusal to perform cunnilingus, although he demanded that she should perform fellatio. Friction over this matter led to a termination of the affair. Some time later, the girl began another affair and surprised her second lover by her spontaneousness in performing fellatio between successive acts, although she did not demand that he perform cunnilingus in turn. When the second lover responded to fellatio by simultaneously performing cunnilingus, the girl broke into tears and confessed that she had

performed fellatio spontaneously simply because she had hoped that he would respond to this by performing cunnilingus, thereby reassuring her that her genitalia were not as repulsive as her first lover's refusal to do so seemed to imply.

*Case 4:* Two women, belonging to two different Occidental groups living nearly 5,000 miles apart, of different socio-economic backgrounds and courted some 20 years apart by two different men, were extremely reluctant to permit manual contact with their genitalia, even after having engaged in coitus, because they felt that their clitori were too large. On discovering that their respective lovers did not find this repulsive, they became extremely passionate. By contrast, in Micronesia, it is the woman with "inadequate" labia and clitoris who does not allow the man she cohabits with to see or to touch her genitalia (4). (Heard in the course of an anthropological discussion.)

*Case 5:* A promiscuous, married, lower middle class European woman undergoing psychotherapy was, for some reason, convinced that her vagina was far too large and relaxed (lacking in tonicity). She therefore permitted only anal coitus, since she felt convinced that her "baggy" ("comme un sac") vagina could not please any man. "In many years there was only one man whom I allowed to have vaginal intercourse with me; something he said made me feel that he would not find my 'baggy' vagina repulsive." (Information from this woman's therapist)

*Case 6:* A highly educated woman consented to coitus under conditions where detection was possible; a fact which prevented the man from having an erection. She felt convinced that the man's failure was due to the "repulsive" appearance of her thigh — from which a skin graft had been taken to cover a more visible burn — and therefore never again yielded to this man. (Data from a college bull session.)

*Case 7:* A young business woman permitted her suitor to manipulate her genitalia, but not her (slightly asymmetrical) breasts, since she feared that their asymmetry would repel him. Only after being reassured on this point did she

allow him to touch her breasts and to deflower her. (Data from a college bull session.)

*Case 8:* An educated woman in analysis who, having lost all her teeth as a result of illness, wore a complete denture, permitted every intimacy except lingual ("deep") kisses and coitus. When she finally confessed that she wore a denture, and was reassured on this score, she took out her denture, kissed the man passionately and surrendered at once. (Information from this woman's analyst.)

It is quite probable that the tendency of certain neurotic girls to neglect personal hygiene and generally to put their worst foot forward during courtship, reflects their conviction that unless a man proves that he is not repelled by their "repulsively unclean" (castrated) organ and bad disposition, he does not love them. This belief is apparently also reflected in folk tales in which ugly girls (or male monsters), after being seduced or married, become transformed into gorgeous creatures . . . presumably because they have been reassured that they are not repulsively dysplastic or castrated. These data suggest that the homosexual man's dread of the castrated female genitalia is matched by the woman's belief that her genitalia are repulsive and that men must overcome an initial revulsion before cohabiting with them. It is, thus, highly probable that the woman's own self appraisal as a "mutilated" or "ugly" being is the real basis of female modesty. The lack of modesty of Micronesian women with well developed external genitalia and the contrasting modesty of "defective" ones confirms this view (4)

Men seem to be unconsciously aware of the woman's self depreciation and her consequent need for reassurance. This fact appears to explain why flattery, or even extravagant "idealization," is so closely related to courtship. It is quite significant in this context that flowery descriptions of the beloved person's physical traits occur almost exclusively in the courting utterances of men; even great woman poets writing about love do not, as a rule, compare the beloved man's lips to roses, nor his teeth to rows of pearls. In fact, female poets write less about the glorious qualities of the

beloved man's *body* than about the power of the love which he inspires and about certain of his character traits, such as valor, fidelity and kindness. This is as true of the love poetry of Louise Labé as of the love letters of the Portuguese nun, Maria Alcoforado, etc. Apparently men do not need extravagant praise for their looks, nor would women feel comfortable were they required to lavish extravagant epithets on their lovers' appearance. This is so true, that a very intelligent woman, with whom the present paper was discussed, burst out laughing when she was asked whether she could imagine herself telling her suitor that his eyes were like stars. Apparently the need for exaggerated praise represents a need for the denial of a keenly felt defect (castration). Where the self image does not include an awareness of a defect, extreme praise is experienced as grotesque.

The only men who seem to require extravagant praise are persons who occupy a position so exalted that it is practically incompatible with sober self appraisal. Such men seem to need incense in order to counteract their preconscious awareness of their wholly human limitations. There are even marked individual variations in such exalted personages' need for glorification and self glorification, as a historical incident will show. Francis I, King of France, was, in many ways, a truly kingly personage, whose sense of his kingship was deeply ingrained, because he had not suddenly "come up in the world," but simply ruled the kingdom of his ancestors. His foe, Charles V, Emperor of Germany and King of Spain had, by contrast "come up in the world"; he had to be *elected* Emperor, even though his election was a relatively foregone conclusion. Moreover, Francis I notoriously visualized himself chiefly as a representative of true knighthood, on the basis of his own *personal* accomplishments and qualities. By contrast, Charles V was anything but a knight; he was chiefly a ruler, because he came from a ruling *family*. Now, on a certain occasion Charles V addressed a letter to Francis I, which, as was customary, began with the listing of Charles V's titles: "We, by the Grace of God, Emperor etc.," the entire list of titles covering sev-

eral lines. Francis I's reply was signed simply with one of the least magniloquent of his titles and dignities: "François, Seigneur d'Ivry" - a crushing assertion of his own sense of *personal* worth, which did not require a garland of titles to display itself.

Yet, in a roundabout way, the flattery addressed at women - but not at men - is often worded in a manner which, through the use of diminutives, reaffirms that which the flattery itself seeks to deny: The smallness, infantilism ("baby") and inadequacy of the person who is seemingly being praised so extravagantly. ("Tiny ears like shells," etc.) By contrast, men are not, as a rule, called "baby," nor are diminutives used in describing them. The only traditional exception known to me is a very ancient Hungarian girls' courting song, in which the girl declares that she will teach the man's "little hand" (*kezecske*) to play with her *nipple*. This particular (infantile) objective may explain why the man's hand is called a "strong little hand." Yet, this diminutive seems so inappropriate even in this context that, when I first read this song, I felt that this endearing diminutive was in extraordinarily poor taste.

Still another ritualized form of homage which, at least superficially, appears to exalt the status of the woman, while reasserting in a roundabout way her inadequacy, is gallant courtesy, protectiveness and etiquette. A realistic appraisal of the ritual of man's courtesy toward women indicates that woman is defined as helpless, physically weak and incompetent. By contrast, the social fiction is that man "serves" his lady not because she is incompetent, but because his "service" - the "*domnei*" of knighthood - formally sanctions her status as an autocrat and the man's status as her servant (*chevalier servant*). Significantly, no such incompetence is imputed to women of lower status, whom man is expected not to serve, but to use sexually.

These observations fully dovetail with the latent content of etiquette observed in connection with men occupying a status so exalted that it is incompatible with realistic human limitations. As I suggested elsewhere, "power" represents

an acting out, in adult life, of infantile-dependent fantasies of omnipotence; it implies the "baby-ing" of the exalted personage, who demands that tasks which men ordinarily perform for themselves should be performed for him by others. (2, 3.) A striking example is that of the almost divine Maori chief, who does not even chew his own food, which is pre-masticated for him. Being carried in a litter, instead of using one's own feet, being formally dressed and undressed like a baby, etc., (13) - all these acts support the interpretation that the acquisition of power implies, in the last resort, a reconquest of the blissful state of infantile omnipotence. In fact, it is not altogether an exaggeration to say that the growth of technology in particular - from the taming of draft animals and of milch cows to the invention of automobiles and railroads - actually serves the unconscious goal of enabling more and more people to acquire "power" and to regress to infancy, where one exists with but a minimum of effort. Moreover, certain other products of technology can also be quite legitimately viewed as actualizations of infantile fantasies: Flight, externalized visual dream worlds (films), etc. It is this distinctive "power" aspect of the status of the "lady" and of the well-served exalted personage which justifies our analogy between the flattery meted out to women and to rulers.

Still another social precipitate of the female castration complex is the pretence of "delicacy" in courtship and the ostentatious denial of "basely sexual" purposes, where a "real lady" is being courted. This delicacy has been explained so far chiefly in terms of the child's need to differentiate between the "pure" mother and the "impure" harlot. (6). While this interpretation is certainly correct, it does not account for all aspects of the phenomenon of "delicacy." The truly significant fact in this context is that no delicacy is shown in the pursuit of a "non-lady," nor is there any denial of "basely sexual" objectives in such cases - and it is precisely this class of women which is *not* defined as infantile, helpless and incompetent, and, above all, as frigid and uninterested in sex, i.e., as castrated. It is almost a basic

tradition in occidental society to view the competent working woman as sexually mature, "immodest" and passionate and therefore as a person who can be approached in overtly sexual terms and who does not stand in need of absurd flattery, overprotectiveness and extravagant courtesy. It is a well known social fact that the "emancipation" of the middle and upper class woman and her increasing show of physical and other competence brought in its train a breakdown of the convention that she needs chivalrous protection, "babying" and "courtesy." This, in turn, led to less extravagantly romantic forms of flattery and courtship and caused an attrition of the fiction of the lady's infantile "a-sexuality."

Equally significant, as a consequence of the female castration complex, is the fact that many completely unrelated languages define man's part in the sexual act as active and woman's part as passive: The man coitizes the woman; the woman is being coitized by man. Moreover, whereas - even in relatively delicate expressions - man describes his own part in the act as active ("I made love to"), woman describes her part in the act not as passive - as something that is done to her - but in terms which evade the issue of passivity and activity ("We made love," etc.), or else in terms which emphasize the total act of love, rather than the relationship to the partner. This dovetails with the previously noted fact that woman poets of love glorify the powers of love rather than the (physical) person of the beloved man.

There are, however, indications that even this linguistic practice is beginning to change, as a result of the increasing emancipation of women and their more and more obvious affirmation of their competence.

*Case 9:* In a rather promiscuous group of young girls working their way - with good grades - through college, it became fashionable to refer to sexual adventures in active terms, i.e., by saying in quite crude words: "I coitized John, etc." This terminology was used even by one member of the group who, during coitus, had fantasies of being raped by jackbooted Nazi stormtroopers; a fact which further high-

lights the denial-functions of the expression: "I coitized John." (Information from a member of this group, who was in analysis.)

The next aspect of the female castration complex to be discussed is the notorious rarity of female genital exhibitionism, which contrasts with a marked exhibitionism of such "positive" (convex, phallus-symbolizing) organs as the breasts and the buttocks, or the indirect exhibitionism of the "positively functioning" genitalia.

*Case 10:* A doudy woman analysand, whose agoraphobia was largely determined by her fear that she might be overcome in the street by uncontrollable sexual impulses and might therefore prostitute herself to all comers on the public highway, realized during her analysis that she used lipstick and painted her fingernails only on days when she was actually menstruating . . . i.e., when her genitalia were markedly functioning. In order to understand the real significance of this "indirect advertising" of her genital state, it is important to stress that during the so-called latency period this young woman was greatly distressed not only by her lack of a penis, but also by the fact that - so far as she was able to discover - she did not even have a vagina. Hence, any functioning of her vagina which - like menstruation - could not be ignored and confirmed the existence of that organ led to a symbolic form of exhibitionism (lipstick, painted nails.)

Another form of symbolic exhibitionism in women, apparently related to woman's recent emancipation and rediscovered competence, concerns changes in the attire of pregnant women. Formerly many middle and upper class pregnant women did everything they could to minimize the pregnant abdomen, by wearing tight stays, etc. Today's pregnant woman wears clothes which almost exaggerate her pregnancy.

*Case 11:* The young agoraphobic analysand referred to in Case 10 had the following recurrent fantasy: "Some day I will become pregnant. I will be monstrously, obscenely and ostentatiously bulging out in front. I will walk around the town on the arm of my husband, boldly advertising that,

despite maternal prohibitions, I did have intercourse; that there had been a penis inside me." In her teens this analyst used to look at her feces, equating hard feces with masculinity and soft feces with femininity.

Actually, genital exhibitionism on the part of females occurs, as a rule, only in areas where "adequate" women are only those who possess protuberant external genitalia, which appear to be penis equivalents. (4) At the same time, a few actually unattractive women tend to displace their castration complex from the genitalia to the rest of their bodies, and become offensively exhibitionistic about their sex organs.

*Case 12:* In a psychiatric setting, many analytically sophisticated professional men commented upon the fact that a certain very unattractive woman colleague was in the habit of sitting in such a manner as to display quite ostentatiously her genitalia, which often became fully visible, since she wore no panties. Moreover, as a humorist expressed it: "You cannot escape her! She keeps on turning in her chair in such a way that her genitalia are always pointed at you, the way a machine gunner pivots his gun to aim it at his moving targets. I bet she has a real vagina dentata." To this quip another humorist - unconsciously re-emphasizing the female castration complex - retorted: "It may be a vagina dentata - but those are not real teeth - it is a dental plate." It is probably not without significance that this woman, who so ostentatiously displayed her genitals, was, though financially fairly well off, always rather shabbily dressed and made no effort to make the most of her few assets. Her entire appearance combined a generalized and ostentatious display of her total unattractiveness with a "careless" and ostentatious exhibition of her genitalia.

The castration complex of women, together with their need for reassurance, may also be responsible for the fact that the traditional petting pattern is arranged in a sequence, which begins with the most secondary - and most emphatically exhibited - erotogeneous zones and involves a gradual approach to contact with the genitalia. It is usually assumed that the function of this foreplay "build up" is to stimulate

the *woman* who, supposedly, is more slowly aroused than the male. However, the data just cited suggest that there is also a second layer of significance: The gradual approach women insist upon may very well have as one of its objectives the irreversible arousal of the *man* - through contact with such (reassuring) female penis equivalents as the tongue and breasts - to such an extent that the final contact with the "mutilated" or "repulsive" female sex organ will not cool his ardor - for example, by mobilizing, before excitement is sufficiently strong, his own castration anxiety in the presence of the penis-less female groin.

The woman's unconscious fear, that the sight of her genitalia might render the man impotent - which motivates in part the widespread custom of cohabiting in the dark - determines in turn her wish to test the man's potency before surrendering to him and also explains why "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned."

The previously mentioned neglected appearance of some basically exhibitionistic women is primarily interpretable as a *non*-seductive exhibitionistic defense against *seductive* exhibitionistic impulses. (Case 10) Nonetheless, an equally important and often neglected purpose of exhibitionistic dowdiness is to challenge the man's potency, as well as his ability to notice the attractiveness lurking behind the dowdy façade, which symbolizes castration. In such maneuvers dowdiness is comparable to the hedge of thorns which surrounds Sleeping Beauty, to the dragon who guards the captive Princess, or to Cinderella's crust of ashes. Only the knight who overcomes - or else ignores - these deterrent obstacles can be relied upon not to become impotent or homosexual in the presence of the "repulsive" - and also dangerous - female sex organ. The tests of courage which the lady may demand from her suitor have a comparable function.

However, even such obstacles and tests may not suffice to protect the woman against disappointment at the critical moment. In one of Schiller's ballads the knight, after performing a wantonly imposed test feat, curtly rejects the lady who is about to reward him for having risked his life. In

an old joke about dragon slaying princes, the young hero, about to be awarded the hand of the princess for his valor, rejects the princess and asks for the king's hand instead, on the grounds that he is a "fairy prince" (=homosexual). This anecdote sheds new light upon Spartan military homosexuality.

It might also be noted in passing that, insofar as hedges and monsters form an obstacle between the knight and the princess, these deterrents may also be thought of as "external hymens" - an insight which can be immediately correlated with Helene Deutech's (1) view, that some women's hymen is located at the entrance of the vagina, while that of other women is symbolically located at the outer boundary of their selves. In the present context, courting rituals, tests and obstacles may be thought of as a third type of (external) hymen. This finding acquires further validity in the lights of Freud's (7) and Yates' (14) analysis of the fear of defloration which - like the slaying of dragons - is viewed as a risky undertaking.

These conclusions oblige us to establish a close connection between the "repulsive" and the "dangerous" female organ. In some instances one and the same dream or fantasy may condense both the repulsive and the dangerous aspects of the female organ into a single image or dream.

*Case 13:* A depressed young male analysand, rendered ineffectual and dependent by an exceptionally possessive and seductive mother, to whom he was bound hand and foot both by conscious sexual wishes and by a bitter love-hate, had what he called a "snapshot" dream: "Numerous spiders - some of which are black widows - are massed around an electric wall outlet." The analysand's associations were, in part, as follows: "The previous day I had a discussion with another female member of my immediate family about plugs - which are called 'male' - and about outlets - which are called 'female.' The slit of the wall outlet I dreamed about was like a vulva. The spiders which covered it make me think of pubic hair." The patient - who sometimes shaves his armpits, like a woman - promptly ac-

cepted the analyst's comment, that spiders are both repulsive and dangerous, as a correct formulation of his feelings about pubic hair.

This analysand's attitude toward pubic hair is by no means a purely subjective one, since in parts of the Near East the bride is carefully depilated all over before the wedding. Moreover, men belonging to groups in which women depilate the pubis can and do react with anxiety to female pubic hair.

*Case 14:* According to Róheim (11) a Somali male, who visited Budapest, and had apparently cohabited there with a (non-depilated) Hungarian female, reacted with shock to a dream about female pubic hair, which he perceived as a bearded male face. It takes little psychological acumen to realize that this bearded male symbolizes the father - as do, presumably, dragons which guard the princess, and many other "obstacle" symbols of the "external hymen" as well.

Women themselves are often aware of the fact that the pubic hair may strike men as repulsive.

*Case 15:* A colleague provided the information that a promiscuous young woman analysand, when about to embark on a new affair, sometimes asked her prospective lover whether he wished her to shave her pubis beforehand; a question which, according to this young woman analysand, several men answered in the affirmative.

The preceding considerations shed new light also upon the well known tendency of some hysterical women to insist that they should be loved for their *faults* and should be treated with special tenderness precisely when they are *most disagreeable*. In such instance psychic or characterological defects instead of modesty, are used as means of testing the man's potency and devotion.

These findings illuminate, in turn, a hitherto almost completely neglected function of extreme obesity in the female. In order to understand the full import of Case 16, it is necessary to stress that many obese people view their fat as an outer shell, witness Cyril Connelly's famous quip: "Inside every fat man there is a thin man, crying to be let out."

*Case 16:* A highly intelligent, in many ways very pleas-

ant, but also quite hostile and aggressive woman, consulted her family physician about her extreme obesity, complaining that it prevented her from getting a man. The family physician replied to this complaint as follows: "You think you cannot find a man because you are obese. Actually, however, your obesity is nothing but an alibi and a scotomatizing device. You do not attract men because you are hostile and sarcastic. However, you do not wish to take cognizance of that fact and therefore make yourself fat, so as to be able to blame your unattractiveness on your obesity." The young woman reacted to this sagacious comment by shedding 30 of her 70 lbs. of excess weight in the space of a few weeks and, shortly afterwards, though still 40 lbs. overweight, found herself a quite acceptable boyfriend. (Information given by the family physician to one of the author's colleagues.)

In all of these instances the contrived dowdiness, obesity or nasty disposition of the woman is both a (paternal ogre) guardian of her virtue and an (external hymen type) test of the man's potency. Indeed, if the man is not discouraged by such deterrent sights, it is assumed that he is also unlikely to lose his potency when confronted with the castrated (repulsive and dangerous) female organ, which both Freud (8) and Ferenczi (5) have compared to the Medusa's head. Moreover, Ferenczi (5) specifically reported, that a mother habitually intimidated her son by exposing her pubis to him. In this context, too, the interpretation of the external obstacle as an "external hymen" seems quite valid. Indeed, just as the overcoming of external barriers is a knightly feat, so the capacity to perform defloration in the *normal* way is widely held to be a masculine feat. Where the surgical infibulation of the bride makes normal defloration impossible, the Somali groom, who cannot bring himself to slit his bride open with his fingernail and demands that she be defibulated surgically by an old woman, is according to Róheim (11), ridiculed as an unmanly man.

The last problem to be considered is the transformation of the "repulsive" (castrated) vagina into the dangerous vagina dentata. In one sense, the castrating vagina dentata

is but the mirror-image complement of the impotency inducing, repulsively castrated, vagina, whose sight, by "proving" to the man that there are "castrated" beings, so frightens him that, in order to escape castration in turn, he becomes either homosexual, or else impotent. This giving up of the organ's functions, in order to save the organ itself, is, of course, the well known unconscious maneuver of boys entering the latency period. In brief, from the impotency inducing repulsive and ominous female organ it is psychologically only a short step to the dangerous and actually castrating vagina dentata. This step is taken by means of an unconscious extrapolation from the dangers of impotency to the dangers of actual castration.

The attribution of castrative abilities to the castrated female organ is due, in part, to the observation that coitus is followed by detumescence. This theory is clearly expressed by the Somali, who, according to Róheim (11) define the vagina as "the place where the penis goes to die." Some neurotic women actually view coitus as a means of rendering the man temporarily impotent:

*Case 17:* A married woman analysed once said to her husband after coitus: "Now I really fixed your penis. Now you cannot, for a while, get an erection and make other women pregnant." The real import of this comment is highlighted by the fact that the woman in question knew for a fact that her husband loved her and was faithful to her.

Another source of the imputation of castrative tendencies to the female is the assumption that women wish to castrate men in retaliation for their own castrated state. This explains why Nunberg (9) and others found that, in neurotic fantasy, in folklore and in quasi-mythical pseudo-history as well, both circumcision and castration are held to have been originated by women who, being themselves "castrated", apparently desired to retaliate by castrating the men, who, they believe, castrated them in the first place. Indeed, side by side with the clinically observed belief of neurotic women, that they were castrated by their mothers, there are primitive beliefs suggesting that the castrator of women was a male.

Thus, according to Raum (10) the African Chaga tradition, as taught *by women to women*, is that, formerly, the women had the penis and that she was deprived of it by mysterious horned beings. Likewise, Róheim (12) reports that in Australia men are believed to have ablated the female penis. Seen in the light of these myths, the castrating vagina dentata only takes back what had originally belonged to it and does so by means which transform the essentially passive-receptive vagina into a dangerous and active organ, endowed with phallic teeth and - as in Case 12 - even resembling a machine gun.

The fact that, in Case 12, a defensive male witticism defined the teeth of the vagina dentata as a mere dental plate, further highlights the unconscious nexus between the (external, artificial) vaginal denture and the external barriers representing the woman's father which the knight must overcome before gaining access to the princess (Case 8). This interpretation is strongly supported by Róheim's (11) finding that Australians view virgins as dangerous demon women, who must be deflowered in order to be humanized and suitably feminized.

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# Phallic Fantasies, Fear of Death, and Ecstasy

by

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The unconscious mechanism of ecstatic states seems to be one of the central problems in understanding creative activity. In his analysis of Paul Hanns Sachs 1) describes how ecstasy, suddenly exploding, by its almost hallucinatory force is man's only weapon to conquer death. But ecstasy is brief. When it has passed, the ego cannot keep the illusion of eternal life. Other mechanisms, less fascinating, less effective, never reaching consciousness, are mobilized as a defense against the inexorable fact that life is short and that we all are mortal. The fantasy of the phallic mother and a special variation of it, the child's unconscious fantasy of being his mother's phallus, seem to be a less drastic but more lasting defense against fear of death. If this phallic fantasy is weakened through increased pressure of fear of death, the ego is in danger of giving up both itself and its object relations. Its last resort is to turn away momentarily from reality, to revert to magic feelings of omnipotence, to the happiness of a sudden blaze of ecstasy.

Yet the defense mechanisms are alike, in the unconscious but continuous phallic fantasy and in the brief, conscious state of ecstasy. In both cases the ego wards off the fear of death through denial, through reversal into the opposite, and through the feeling of double identity. The difference is that, in ecstasy, the ego gives up reality testing and the double identity becomes conscious. Hence the triumphant experience that one is chosen and called. In the phallic fantasy the certainty of being the chosen one is weaker, reduced to obscure doubt, to a battle between a feeling "as if" one

were called and reason, which rejects the concept as childish and unrealistic.

The analysis of a patient suffering from fear of death might give an insight into the manifold motivation of this fundamental fear and some of the defense mechanisms that the ego mobilizes to conquer "the last enemy". Note 1.

A high-school teacher in his late twenties sought the psychoanalyst for treatment. He had begun to wonder what his relations to his pupils was really like. He was worried by the idea that he might make them too dependent on him, but he did not know what else he could do.

The man sitting opposite me gave the impression that his life was happy and successful. He seemed to carry out his plans without effort and with considerable success. When, after a while, I remarked that it was certainly useful for a teacher to become clear of the relations between him and his pupils but perhaps not sufficient reason to start a long psychoanalytical treatment, he fell silent. The expression of detached friendliness slowly faded away. He seemed to be surprised and somewhat puzzled. Then he said abruptly in a quiet voice, "I have never been happy".

I will call him Joseph, the youngest, whose life was marked by the unique idea that he was the only child, in spite of the fact that there were other children in the family.

As a child Joseph was pretty, gentle and affectionate, with long, dark curls and big blue eyes. Up to the age of five, summer was to him a luxuriant green landscape full of mystery. And winter was to him a high blue sky and the sunlight sparkling like diamonds on dry white snow. He remembers the silence in the flat where the leather furniture smelled clean and coarse. People moved quietly and spoke in hushed voices. But sometimes he and his sisters would roar with laughter and for a moment break the enchantment. He falls ill, with high temperature. The idyl is gone for a while, and galloping horses and bulls fill his nursery. There was a slaughter-house in the neighbourhood. It burned,

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Note 1. Some factual aspects of this case have been changed or omitted.

and he remembered the sight of the charred carcasses. But his fears soon disappear. A soft veil glides again over his memories, and the contours lose their sharpness. Stillness and rythmical monotony rule again his protected life.

He knows very well when the idyl broke. His father, a well-to-do man, wanted to try his fortune in another country. The family left the little town in the North of England and moved to a South American country. But the credulous man was enticed into transactions where overnight he lost the last penny of the capital he had saved in his own country. The grown-ups around Joseph starved. Some kind people intervened. Joseph got some old clothes. Stiff as a poker he stood in front of the mirror letting the strange women dress him. He did not know, did not want to know, the humiliation of poverty and social degradation. "This is a fake", he thought and felt how he made himself empty inside.

His father never again managed to reach his previous standard. He became depressed and apathetic. Joseph's mother took over the responsibility of providing for the family. Joseph had to help as much as he could. Nobody bothered to think of schools and education for him. There was an old encyclopedia in the house. He read it from cover to cover. It became his comfort and his resort. He thinks himself that his many and varied interests later in life emanated from that intensive reading. It made him intellectually mature, but isolated him from his playmates.

Sometimes Joseph shouts at his mother and feels bitterness and hatred towards her. But his fits of anger never last long. He sees his mother's loneliness, her heroic struggle for existence. Compassion wells forth inside him. He suppresses his hatred, his accusations, his fear of what will become of him, and also the gnawing feeling of humiliation when he is put to hard physical work. Joseph becomes quiet. He suffers under his father's apathy and lack of enterprise. All the time he is fighting the temptation to share his mother's wordless contempt.

After some years the family has enough money to go

back home. He starts school again. The reading of the encyclopedia proves useful. He passes the entrance examinations without losing years, and later he enters the university as one of the youngest. But both at school and at the university he is isolated. He hides himself behind an ironic attitude and becomes a bit of a highbrow. He ridicules the social legislation of his country. But he hates dictatorship and is always ready to revolt against injustice and persecution. He defends the rights of women and of oppressed peoples and races. But he does not fit in with the crowd. He has become an individualist and an aristocrat, with a great deal of contempt for "common people". A good speaker and a promising scientist. But restless, unstable, torn by contradictory interests. His relations to women show the same lack of consistency. He falls in love, but soon cools and abandons the woman with self-reproach and feelings of guilt. The fear of having hurt them by his love haunts him continually. But the contours are clearer here. He always returns to his fiancée, knowing that, in spite of everything, they belong together for life.

Joseph is a young man who promises a great deal. But one couldn't help asking: Would he live up to his gifts? Would he get continuity into his life?

Already at an early stage in the analysis it becomes clear that Joseph suffers from a painful symptom, fear of death, which is intimately related to a central fantasy that dominates his whole life. His entire personality structure is built around the fantasy of being his mother's penis.

The defensive character of this fantasy determined his transference situation. All the time he is compulsively conscious of his relation to the analyst. He displays a large register of intellectual fireworks and boyish charm, interrupted by feelings of disorientation and helplessness. He does not know where he has the analyst. Sometimes he feels as though he fumbles in the air and meets nothing but the void. But he is also afraid that the analyst will be dazzled by his show. A small mouse staring hypnotized at a wriggling snake. Already here appears plainly the double identity

which is so characteristic of the phallic fantasy. He is both the helpless, passive mouse and the seductive snake.

The double identity and the easy reversibility between object and subject was a pervading trait in his personality. His unconscious passive dependence upon his mother manifested itself in a projective identification. If he felt sad and oppressed he experienced the analyst as a withered old witch and himself as a limp rag doll. In this situation he was tormented by the fear that either he or the analyst would die. If he felt happy, gay and active, she was young, strong and lively.

While apparently still occupied with measuring the distance and closeness in his relation to the analyst, he began to feel how egocentrically he really behaved. It came as a shock to him when he realized that his apparently intensive relationship was an acting-out and far from a true contact with another person. When working through these first transference phenomena it appeared how they were determined by his phallic fantasies.

The anxious observation of the distance between him and the analyst - i.e. the mother - was a fear of overwhelming intra-uterine fantasies. The phallic fantasies are a reassurance that he is able to keep his integrity. He is outside his mother's body, yet part of her. He has attained a certain independence, but will not give up the advantages of dependence. He is protected against oral and anal traumata. His penis is the naval chord through which she gives him nourishment and which, as part of her body, protects him against cold, hunger and dirt. He suddenly understood why, when he left home at the age of 18, he always washed very carefully, changed underwear frequently and was very anxious to get clean and well-cooked food and plenty of vitamins. He felt as though he had a wound and had to take great care of himself. He had to be his own mother and his own child at the same time.

Beside being the defense against intra-uterine fantasies, anal and particularly oral impulses, the fantasy of being his mother's penis is, of course, also a magnificent denial of the

fear of being castrated by her. She has no need to deprive him of anything. He and she are one. They live in symbiosis, and actually there is only one sex.

This special phallic fantasy seems to appear in children who have become fully aware of the difference between the sexes but who had denied their discovery completely later on. Time and again Joseph dreamed that he saw a female genital, "unclosing like a beautiful rose". The dream showed his continuous efforts to establish contact with isolated parts of the ego in order to assimilate what he knows and does not want to know into the whole of his personality. The aesthetic pleasure at the sight of the female genital was a reaction formation against his original feeling of fear and nausea.

His fear of being castrated by his mother was not quite unfounded. She showed him - not so much in words as in deeds - that men were weak, women strong, and that his own father was not able to give him protection, support and help.

But his phallic fantasies were not only a denial of his mother's castrating impulses and an obedience to her - he stuck, in fact, only to her. They were also a defense against an intense fear of having to share her love and care with others. My mother, this fantasy says with great emphasis, exists only for me - even though I pay the price by existing only for her.

Joseph had completely impersonated the role of the only child. When listening to him one got the impression that he was the son of a woman who had become a widow early and who had no other children. He dismissed father and sisters with a shrug of the shoulders as a negligible quantity. "Well, he said indifferently, well, they were there too. But they don't matter, so to speak." He had the same dissimulating attitude towards the analyst's other patients. It was clear that they were uninteresting, mediocre, not too intelligent. At that point in the analysis he was forced to a painful revision. He remembered that his eldest sister had been closely attached to his mother during the hard years after his father's bankruptcy. That happened at a time when his position as

the little lord had collapsed and the family had become poor. Nobody had time for him, they were all busy keeping the worst poverty away. Joseph realized that the dream of being the only child and his mother's penis protected him against the humiliating feeling of being superfluous and a burden to others, a feeling that lay heavy upon him during those years. He also realized that his mother's attitude towards his father was not only contemptuous. Everything indicated that, as a young woman, she had been in love with him and that later - in spite of periods of disdain and impatience - she was bound to him by an unswerving and natural loyalty.

The fantasy of being the only child - his mother's penis - was transformed into the certainty of being an infant prodigy. This helped him to feel superior to his rivals who were all grown-up or almost grown-ups.

But his compulsory registration of the relation between him and the psychoanalyst was also a reiteration of his helpless, fumbling attempts to get into contact with his mother, whom he now experiences as impersonal and distant, powerful but socially helpless, alone and at the same time on guard against emotional contact. His failure to reach real contact with her led to a regressive reinforcement of his phallic fantasies. His capacity for sensing the primary processes was strengthened. He felt that his mother accepted him as her penis. He kept this relation to her, not least from fear of losing the unconscious contact with her if he made himself independent. The child's fantasy of being his mother's penis usually appears through an unconscious interaction between mother and child and always contains a masochistic element. One must remain small and helpless in order not to lose her affection, or, as in Joseph's case, not to lose all contact with her. His relation to his mother never quite reached the plane of reality. The happiest moments they had together were when they dreamed themselves away from the hardness of life and built castles in the air about his future, brilliant career. Mother Aase and a doubting little Pere Gynt who cannot ward off the unpleasant feeling that he was afraid of the reality outside the cottage window.

The less Joseph can get away from feeling his passive tendencies in relation to his mother, the stronger is his fear of dying. The compulsion to observe his relation to the analyst disappears. Instead, now and again, he breaks out into violent laments that the psychoanalyst is directing him. He is the chosen among her patients. She wants him to beat her enemies. Through his activity the analyst will satisfy her own ambitions. He has to become a crusader for the good cause.

Apart from the fact that his laments contain a clear repetition of his relation to his mother, who actually dreamed of a rehabilitation of the family through his activity, this concept primarily contains a defense against taking an initiative of his own. He experienced how his activity did not arise from inside him. Instead the impulse to act came centripetally, from the outside. Therefore the activity he develops is never quite his own, and consequently he rarely feels tired. The advantage is that not only can he allow himself a great deal of passivity, he is also protected against taking the consequences of his actions. Therefore the defeats he might suffer hurt him less. He is also protected against feeling his own aggressiveness. He only fulfills the analyst's (or his mother's) wishes. He fights for her cause, which is not the one he has chosen for himself. In reality he often harmed himself through exaggerated aggression against an antagonist. When the attacked struck back, he was highly surprised: he was convinced that he did not fight for himself. He acted only by order of someone else.

From the analysis of these defense mechanisms a sustaining motive of his Oedipus complex becomes evident: he kills his father in order to relieve his mother of a tiresome burden and denies that he wants to kill him as a rival.

When Joseph does not feel himself directed by the analyst, it seems as if he were drifting around without control. The breaking-away from the phallic mother is experienced as fear of death and means oral regression. He has a feeling that he is lying faint and without a will of his own waiting with half-open mouth for something to happen.

He cannot introject his mother from fear of his own oral sadistic impulses. He wards them off with the attitude of the passive spectator. "Well, he says, I didn't kill her, I watch how life, without mercy, grinds her to pieces."

Since he was not able to grow away from his mother gradually, his desperate efforts to tear himself away from her sometimes had the stamp of treason, not only against his mother but also against himself. At the age of puberty he had joined a group of youths whose attitudes and opinions his mother detested. His revolt failed completely. He rejected them just as strongly as she did. For years he was ashamed of having had contact with them. Thus his mother's moral superiority becomes even more obvious. Another way of liberation was to deny his mother's influence, her intelligence and judgment and treat her, too, as a negligible quantity.

Particularly strongly his hatred turned against people who threatened to confront him with reality. A reality that forced him to acknowledge that he quite definitely was not his mother's only child, nor her penis. That he had never owned her. That he had once been very small, very confused and very ignorant. That he had wanted very much to ask for advice and help, but did not dare to do so. After all it was he who was the negligible quantity, not all the other people.

The feeling of humiliation and shame had been accentuated through traumatic experiences of the primal scene which threw him into an abyss of emotional and intellectual confusion. He understood nothing. Everybody else knew about these mysterious things. All except him, the only child in a family of grown-up and half grown-up people. He dares not see from fear. It is too dangerous. He experiences now the aggressiveness of looking straight at people. At one level, he says, I want to see, know and destroy. At another level I want not to see, not to know but to protect. He saves himself from this ambivalence by his penis overtaking his voyeuristic impulses. He dreams of a pistol that lights up the darkness with a cone of light, making it possible to see what one is

firing at. He uses his penis to investigate woman's womb and genital. His aggressive voyeurism is a reaction formation against the feeling of paralysis and the frightened confusion he experienced when, overwhelmed by his own impulses and fantasies, he was lying in bed in the dark room and witnessed the primal scene. He is not the center - far from it: he is completely outside and superfluous.

Another motive for his feeling of loneliness and humiliation was the fact that his mother used to talk about his "small and pretty penis", regardless of other people's presence. He felt that he could not impress her with his organ and that there was some contempt in her way of manipulating it. It was extremely difficult for him to admit that his father's penis was bigger and more powerful.

During the same hour he says suddenly, in a low and shy tone of voice, "I never thought of what you really think of me. I have always taken it for granted that I was the chosen one. Perhaps you think that I am a troublesome and precocious prig."

The same day, in accordance with his double identity, he turned a girl out of the classroom because she complained that he did not pay enough attention to her. It was the first time that the otherwise very patient man used such drastic means.

Joseph's sometimes provocative sureness of himself begins to disappear. He feels small and useless. The feeling that he might be a negligible quantity increases when the oral component of his castration fear appears.

Joseph experiences how he has humiliated himself and his penis from fear of starving to death.

He remembered that his mother had an ivory tooth with engraved elephants pulling each other's trunks. He liked it and wanted very much to have it himself. But now he feels there is something sad and revolting about a thing of art that has once been part of an animal. A tool for passion, aggression and rage.

A little girl had a toy elephant with a movable trunk. When she was happy she put the trunk up in the air, when

she was sad she let it hang down. As a child he watched elephants in the Zoo. Thinking back now he feels how humiliating it is for this wild and free animal to become domesticated. He begs with his trunk from children who stare at him, sucks up bread and bananas - perhaps even trouser buttons - and puts them into his mouth. During the years of puberty he had a fantasy that one could suck up one's own sperm if one contracted the rectal muscles. His penis is not only a breast that can be sucked, it is also a mouth that can suck. An exhibitionist, it suddenly occurs to him, is a man begging with his penis for water or milk.

He has heard about a mother who does not take care of her children. The social worker finds them emaciated and cyanotic. He experiences himself as the starving child. "At first one beats the air and screams. Finally one just chokes. Tries to suck with all body openings. There are fakirs who can pump water into themselves by means of anal contractions. One can suck with eyes, ears, penis, and even believe that the navel is a mouth. One degrades oneself and sucks with one's penis. It does not matter what one gets: urine, faeces, people's aggression - as long as one is filled. But afterwards one does not know how to get it out again. Everything is cramp. God invented the elephant, he exclaims, in order to illustrate how one can debase oneself with one's penis. But what on earth am I to do? I am completely at a loss. But perhaps that's what I have experienced. This terrible bewilderment. Do you think I have wanted my penis to be the rest of a navel chord that will suck myself on to my mother again?"

A dream completes this decisive phase of his analysis: he is a small child sucking the breast of a beautiful woman. Suddenly he notices that his penis is very small and that he is urinating happily and completely unembarrassed. If one gets liquid in the mouth, one can also give it out. He feels happy and is convinced that he is no more in danger of being dried out. He experiences the dream from two angles: from underneath with the eyes of the sucking child, and from above with the eyes of the woman. Then the dream scene

widens and he sees himself as a grown-up man standing beside the woman with the child. But his face changes. It becomes older. Finally it is like the face of a very old man. A teacher that he has always admired.

Joseph's tendency to double identity is represented not only in the experience of the double perspective but also in his changing from child to man. But the dream is also a first attempt to recognize his father's part as his mother's husband and having a share in his own existence.

Joseph realizes that his phallic activity warded off a lot of chaotic and divergent drives. His penis has become an executive organ which gives outlet for intensive pregenital tensions. But this is a grave insult to his manliness. He blames his mother for having forced him actively into this humiliation by belittling his penis and frustrating him in his pregenital needs. Therefore he had no choice. He wanted to live. The tensions were too big. Only the regressive use of his penis saves him from the insufferable pressure and fear of death which threatens to destroy his ego.

When the analysis approaches the final stage Joseph's fear of dying becomes still more intense. It seems to him quite impossible to think that he might keep any sort of relation with the analyst after he has finished. To part as friends is unthinkable. He will slip on a banana skin and be killed the same day he finishes the analysis. He remembered how he tried to liberate himself from his mother by provoking her to the utmost - but how he always kept a small thread to her, so that she could not renounce himself completely. To leave her was to kill both her and himself.

Joseph now begins to realize that the ecstatic states he experiences now and then are a defense against his fear of death. They gave him a feeling of peace and relaxation, which he had longed for bitterly as long as he could remember.

Joseph sought an ecstatic contact, a contact where he could glide away beyond time and space. Then he would become one with nature. He would stand still on a meadow until he became a tree, walk on a virgin shore or in a forest

where nobody had ever walked before. He remembers a hot day in the tropics. The sun was vibrating. He was watching the sea outside his bedroom window. He glides into the sea, but at the same time he is lying in his bed. "To be able to glide apart, to dissolve into something else, if it were only possible! At home I cannot sleep, but to dissolve here is not so dangerous. Then I shall glide into you." During these ecstatic states he talked in a low voice. The words came rhythmically and the sentences had melody.

But the next day his nostalgic mood would change into the opposite. He feels limp like a rag doll. A rag doll with a face contorted with hatred, who could suddenly vault into an arc de cercle and scream. With his eyes he moves a vase of a decidedly phallic shape standing on the book-case. The vase comes and goes as he wants it to, if only he contracts his eyes a little. He wants desperately to free himself, but he is powerless and afraid of destroying himself and the analyst.

Sometimes he manages to overcome his ambivalence and actually remembers the overwhelming love he felt for his mother as a child and the uncompromising loyalty he always had towards her even as a grown-up man. This love is so boundless that he is afraid of losing his own ego. But when the dam bursts his passion breaks forth like a flood and he is afraid of losing control over the inner and outer world. He experiences fear of death. "I make myself lifeless, flattened out, that I shall not burn. But I should like to flare up like a flame of fire and be consumed to the end. I should love her so that I should become substance without matter, form without contents. As long as I keep my love inside me it is endless, boundless. As long as I do that she and I are immortal. But if I show it, I give it out. It is submitted to life and death. It becomes mortal, and then we must die. The most terrible thing is to wake up in the night and know: *A deux heures le matin, then you will exist no more.*"† At the end of this hour he becomes silent and tries to get back to reality.

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†(Referring to A. Koestler: *Dialogue with Death*)

"I refused to know how I loved my mother as a child, and how madly I love her this very day. I didn't dare to - but it is true."

At the beginning of the analysis Joseph experienced ecstatic states of quite opposite character. Instead of being absorbed by a feeling of boundless love and devotion to his mother, he affaced himself and his father and perished together with him. In such a mood he feels one day a powerless rage towards a "narrow-minded antagonist" who is opposed to his ideas about a progressive school reform. He is deeply depressed and thinks it is no use fighting for anything. "Evil will triumph anyway. It is no use proving that somebody is wrong." He is afraid of losing his balance and getting violent. He wants to jump up and down and scream, wave his arms and legs and show his anger. He feels sick and filled with his antagonist's aggression. He sucks it up without resistance.

He wants to kill him and commit suicide afterwards. The same day there was an item in the newspaper about a man, wrongfully accused of espionage, who had thrown himself down from the roof of a high house and was killed. "Imagine," he exclaimed, "what ecstasy - what triumph - he must have experienced."

He understood and felt a secret affinity to that unknown dead man, who was both a murderer and a suicide. In a state of ecstatic rage and self-effacement Joseph had himself experienced, with an almost hallucinatory clearness, how he tore his father's body to pieces. Together with him he sank down into an abyss of desperate humiliation which left a feeling of a dark and empty nothing. After such an experience it could be said about Joseph as Thomas Mann 2) says about Moses:

Er tötete früh, im Auflodern, darum wusste er besser als jeder Unerfahrene, das Töten zwar köstlich, aber getötet zu haben höchst grässlich ist, und dass du nicht töten sollst.

(He killed early, in an outburst of passion, thus he knew better than any experienced man that it is costly to kill but awful to have killed and that thou shouldst not kill.)

The hallucinatorily experienced murder of his father he had tried to ward off through an attitude of friendly aloofness, a calm and wise understanding of people without taking sides. Another personality trait, a mild but infallible optimism and a calm perseverance, seems to have developed in connection with the ecstatic victory of fear of death in guiltless separation and reunion with his mother.

Looking back at Joseph's analysis it becomes clear that the fundamental fantasy of being his mother's phallus stands in intimate relation to his fear of death. It is a compromise: he develops a reactive, seemingly independent activity but need not fear oral traumata and castration. The fantasy gives him the illusion of independence. But it also prevents him from a normal development of object relations. He dares not introject his mother completely, because this means to release fear of death. In the phallic fantasy the separation from her is merely suggested, but never completed. His mother's imago remains in the border land between inner and outer reality, in the intermediate area, to use an expression by Winnicott. Joseph himself remains part of her and yet is outside her. He remains in an atmosphere of uncertainty and doubt. He never quite knows who his mother really is. She is near but also far, real and at the same time unreal. She is wellknown and familiar but also unattainable, strange and contourless. Later in life all his object relations become undecided and gliding, because they have the tendency to stay in the intermediate area.

His self-reliance remains unstable. It is true that the phallic fantasy provides him with a secondary selfassurance. He behaves as if he has no rivals, no brothers or sisters, no father. They do not exist. He also gets a reactive self-confidence in relation to women: "I don't believe," he says once, "that women have any sexual needs unless they are directed towards me." He denies his feeling of passive dependence, of insignificance and littleness before them. His fear of death was not least a terrible fear of experiencing that without a woman he was totally superfluous, a worthless parasite who could not stand on his own legs. His fear of being

humiliated, which was connected with his fear of dying was due to a feeling that his mother had forced him to misuse his genital organs in order to gain pregenital satisfaction and regressive contact.

Only during brief states of ecstasy did he experience complete victory over the fear of death and humiliation. In the blinding light of ecstasy the phallic fantasies appeared as a groping, insufficient defense whose only function was to stress and fixate his passivity and dejection.

In the state of ecstasy his feeling of debasement and humiliation was reversed. He got to a state of triumphant rehabilitation through regression to magic feelings of omnipotence which increased the narcissistic cathexis of his weakened ego. He is no longer left a passive victim to the relentless laws of nature. For a brief moment he is the master of life and death. Now he is able also to rehabilitate his parents, whom he formerly experienced as weak and helpless. They remain no longer in the intermediate area. He introjects them completely. The suffering and failure of his father assume superhuman dimensions. His mother's kindness and care also lose their individual traits and assume the magic force and power of an archaic mother goddess. In the state of ecstasy Joseph is invulnerable and omnipotent. He gets a feeling of boundless freedom: the freedom to annihilate and the freedom to adore. The freedom to murder, but also the freedom to give eternal life.

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If the state of ecstasy is dominated by destructive impulses the ego destroys itself and the hated object in a sudden stroke of maximal activity, in the fancied experience of a double murder. It is accompanied by a feeling of desperate rage and hunger, of endlessly falling down a dizzying abyss.

If the libidinous impulses are dominating, the ego is filled with feelings of longing and devotion. The boundaries towards reality are extended. The ego merges with the loved and protecting object, and outer reality is transformed into the inner one. A feeling of bliss and peaceful anonymity re-

places the painful consciousness of individual loneliness, of the limitation of life and final death.

The destructive as well as the libidinous form of ecstasy are the basic motive of artistic creativity. At the summit of his art the artist is able to let other human beings share his experience. They are caught by the same overwhelming emotion, and for a moment they lose their feeling of personal identity. They forget that they are mortal. The experience of positive states of ecstasy through art is probably the underlying emotion of Berenson's 3) demand that art shall have a life-enhancing effect.

Understandable as this demand may be, from a human point of view, we cannot leave out the fact that art also can communicate the feeling of destructive frenzy. The introduction of the hated and despised object accompanied by a feeling of the ultimate triumph of hate, the tragic feeling that life is meaningless and futile seems to be the basic motive of existentialist literature, most clearly and concisely expressed in one of the latest novels of Camus, "La chute". This new literary movement came into focus after the Second World War, a period of hate and manslaughter. Its literary ideal is Franz Kafka, a young man in the chaos and destruction of Europe after the First World War, who hated himself and lived under the powerful shadow of his father without being able to free himself.

The phallic narcissistic character is especially liable to experience states of ecstasy, negative as well as positive. But the libidinous and reparative impulses seem to dominate. It is not surprising, therefore, that we often find this type of personality among creative artists. If the reparative impulses are especially strong but cannot find an outlet in creative activity, they are often a powerful motive in the choice of humanitarian professions, such as social workers, teachers, and not least psycho-therapists. This seems to explain the remarkable interest in art and the wide-spread tendency to produce art within this group of professions.

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Joseph's fear of death was an expression of the dramatic

conflict which entirely belonged to his inner world. Now and again, when his anxiety overwhelmed him, his sense of reality surrendered to a state of timeless ecstasy. Evidently similar mechanisms are set to work if the fear of dying is real. When a man knows that his days are counted and that violent death will end the biological development and his normal curve of life.

In "The Invisible Writing" Arthur Koestler 4a) describes the ecstatic states he experienced when he was expecting his death sentence in Franco's prison in Seville. During the weeks before he was arrested Koestler experienced a re-activation of some childhood conflicts which have a certain similarity to those of Joseph. They culminated and found their solution in recurrent states of enchantments which enabled him to endure his solitary confinement without collapsing. These ecstatic states became the turning-point in his personal development and made him acknowledge human values, which he previously tried to deny.

Among the motives that were re-activated was first and foremost, his old fear of being a traitor. It flared up anew when he was writing a book about Franco's terror which was not wholly based on facts. It got worse when he came into personal contact with sympathizers of Franco, who unfortunately proved to be ordinary kind people whom he was forced to cheat. Another essential motive that was re-activated was the feeling of utmost social degradation and abandonment when he was taken in chains through the streets of Malaga and photographed for the rogues' gallery.

But he also witnessed the humiliation, contempt and cruelty his Spanish fellow prisoners were exposed to when they were taken to execution. He knew - and was not blind to the fact - that the same fate awaited him - today, tomorrow or in a month. He had no longer active control of his own life, because the mastery of time had been taken away from him. The enemy - one might say - lived for him and killed him exactly when it suited him. In addition there was the gnawing feeling that he was imprisoned on account of something that he could not defend. Just as Joseph could not

understand why other people were aggressive towards him, so Koestler found it difficult to grasp the aggression of the insurgents as directly aimed against him. He felt as if he were not quite responsible for his actions - he was sent out on a mission, first and foremost by his friend and employer Muenzenberg. Behind the living person Muenzenberg there is the symbolic employer, "the party", which may be a mother imago, even though it is not clearly expressed.

The feeling of suffering for a cause that he has never felt quite loyal to he shares with Dostoievsky. And when Dostoievsky 5) says that "it is bitterly hard to suffer for something that has now turned into the opposite - to suffer for abandoned convictions" this is the consequence of a lack of ego identity which, in certain situations, was characteristic of Joseph as well as of Koestler.

The fear of being a traitor, the feeling of utmost social degradation and complete dependency on the enemy was overcome by Koestler in the states of ecstasy. They were initiated through a period of pleasant dreams. Koestler's description of this state of mind is sometimes reminiscent of Joseph's cosmic ecstasy during analysis.

"Then I was floating on my back in a river of peace, under bridges of silence. It came from nowhere and flowed nowhere. Then there was no river and no I. The I had ceased to exist."

In his ecstatic states of mind Joseph experienced the union with a cosmic mother imago. Koestler goes yet further - perhaps under the pressure of the reality of the fear of death. River and I, cosmos and ego cease too. One surmises the suicidal impulse behind depersonalization and ecstasy.

But to Koestler too, this ecstasy may have meant the union with a lost object. It protected him against a complete loss of object relations - a justified fear for a prisoner in solitary confinement. The ecstatic states of mind seem to have brought him closer to his fellow men than ever before. The oscillation between you and I does not only take place in the

inner plane but also in reality. This is shown by the incident with one of his fellow prisoners.

"When I had broken my last cigarette into halves and shared it with little Nicholas, he never thanked me because he knew that his pleasure in inhaling the smoke was mine, that to give was to take because we all were attached to the same umbilical cord and were all lying in the same pulsating womb of transition. If everybody were an island how could the world be a concern of his."

Koestler ends his narration of the period in the Spanish prison by saying that "without self-imposed abstinence, the hours by the window would not have borne fruit" and leaves to the reader to find the inner connection between abstinence and ecstasy. But the denial of sexual needs as such does not necessarily lead to ecstasy. Only if the instinctual urges bring the individual into degrading dependency on another human being, the sudden, total denial of all needs may be felt as a liberation. The ego has overcome the narcissistic violations and - for a short while - holds control of inner and outer reality. Without this increase of the narcissistic cathexis of the ego the ecstatic state of mind cannot come about. Joseph as a child and Koestler as an adult in prison were negligible quantities. In ecstasy they triumph over degradation. They have grasped the infinite. They have conquered the last enemy.

In *The Invisible Writing* as well as the earlier book *Dialogue with Death*, 4b) Koestler is on guard against being compared to Dostoievsky. His conversation in prison seems to Koestler "a cowardly surrender of the intellect, not to divine grace, but to the trembling of the flesh." Here Koestler touches an essential difference between the melancholiac's need of atonement and the forgiveness of the ecstatic states. The melancholiac acknowledges his guilt and atones for it by suicide. The ego shrinks in favour of the super-ego while the ecstatic ego is expanding both in the inner and the outer world. In the ecstatic states the question of crime and punishment has become irrelevant. There is no

need of atonement to gain forgiveness and the fear of death is conquered in the vision of eternal togetherness.

During the hours by the window Koestler got his self-esteem back by losing himself in the universe. But Dostoevsky, while in Siberia, paid homage to the czar in bad poems. He confessed to his "guilt". In a frenzy of selfhatred he drove himself into one degrading situation after the other. His craving for penance was never satisfied. Only in the last year of his life - when he made the Pushkin speech - he seems to have become reconciled to himself.

But Dostoevsky was not alien to ecstatic experiences. Prince Myshkin 6) relates the experiences and thoughts of a man sentenced to death (i.e. Dostoevsky) while he is waiting for the fire from the execution platoon:

"In some distance there was a church, and the gilded cupola was glittering in the bright sunshine. He remembered having stared at the radiant cupola, steadily and persistently: he could not tear himself away from that light. It seemed to him as if those beams of light were the substance of his future existence and that, within three minutes, he would become one with them."

Here is the beginning of ecstasy: "within three minutes he would become one with them." But it is not fulfilled. Just after the reprieve, when the years of exile in Siberia awaited him, he wrote to his brother, 7) in the first exultation at escaping death: "After all, on voit le soleil". But Dostoevsky did not merge with it. He saw the light and remained in darkness.

The victory over death is also a fundamental motive in the Christian religion. The believer dies in the ecstatic blotting-out of the self through identification with the dead man on the cross. He is resurrected by the ecstatic experience of glorification and eternal life through identification with the child in the protective arms of the virgin. Death and resurrection are basic motives in the Christian religion, as in all religions.

The first time one sees Epstein's Madonna and Child at

the entrance of the convent of "The Holy Child Jesus" 8) the spectator is overwhelmed by a feeling that he partakes in celestial happiness.

This shock-like feeling of liberation from the law of gravity is attained through an untraditional representation of the traditional subject. It reveals a completely new treatment of spatial relations. The child is soaring in front of his mother's body. His head is in level with her stomach, his feet are hanging loosely downwards quite a bit above hers. Without ever touching him the arms of the mother seem to urge the child forwards. In restrained admiration, softly protecting and abiding, they are slanting downwards behind the child's arms which are widely stretched out in the shape of the cross. As a whole the sculpture has a markedly phallic character. It does not seem to be fastened to the wall but to soar, light and free, in front of it. One cannot but expect that it will fly upwards at any moment, right into the sky.

Epstein's Child Jesus is smiling, as in innumerable other representations of the Virgin and Child. But by virtue of the new configuration a new theme is introduced: the child is crucified to his mother. Note 2. While striving away from her, his face expresses a knowledge that he will be tied to her for ever. The masochistic trait in the fantasy of being the mother's phallus becomes evident in a piece of art.

The child's clothes are wrapped tightly round his body and legs in horizontal folds. They fixate him and hinder his movements. But neither has the mother full freedom of movement. Her arms are held back by the oblique folds of her garment, while the vertical pleats of her skirt are falling loosely downwards, ready to give away to her steps. The emotionally new conception of the mother-and-child theme lies in the amazing insight that the fate of the child is already determined - long before Pilate pronounced sentence upon the Jewish rebel. From the beginning the child is crucified to his mother.

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Note 2. This interpretation was made by Dr. Margaret Little when she first showed me the statue during a visit to London in 1953.









The ambivalence between being crucified to the mother's body and at the same time, together with her, rising towards the sky, the dynamic interplay between being chained and soaring lightly in the air, between bodily confinement and the triumph over gravitation evokes in the spectator a feeling of inevitable tragedy, but also the illusion of boundless freedom.

It is true, the child's body is thin, almost emaciated, but his arms are not yet stretched out as on the cross in pain and hopeless appeal. His hands are not yet nailed but are turned towards the spectator in a powerful gesture of challenge and invitation. The child seems to embrace the whole world under him and welcome it with joy.

Epstein's statue has just that life-enhancing quality which Berenson speaks of. It gives a feeling of lightness which seems to triumph over the laws of nature. The same feeling of lightness may appear when the ego experiences freedom from guilt and has conquered its instinctual needs. But it is the same feeling of being unburdened which appears when inhibitions are overcome and unlimited psychic expansion seems possible. Body image and the image of the psychic personality become one. The liberation from the mother seems to have already occurred, a new feeling of active belonging together breaks forth, and the mother with the child that is crucified to her communicate a feeling of ecstasy.

\* \* \*

The ecstatic identification with the murdered man on the cross that Hanns Sachs describes in his study of Paul seems to lack the life-enhancing effect. "The Gates of Heaven" is an essay of his that every time one reads it impresses the reader by force of its wisdom, congeniality and harmony of style.

The consuming desire to conquer death, Hanns Sachs means, is the driving force in Paul's reformation of the Mosaic faith. The fear of death he experiences was not only fear of the shortness of life and the speechless void that awaited him. He was afraid of death because he felt that he had not enough love to give. Therefore his desire was sinful and sin

was the same as death. His sin and his feeling of death seem to indicate how strongly his erotic impulses were mixed with hate and aggression. Saul watched zealously that nobody in the community should transgress from the letter of the law. But Paul felt perhaps that his religious zeal had not so much to do with love. In ecstasy Paul overcame his fear of death, the boundaries of the ego were dissolved and he became united with the one he longed for. "But if I was in my body or out of it I do not know. God knows it."

Paul centres his religious message around two rituals that both lead to the conquest of death through identification. In the communion the believer identifies himself with the sacrifice of the son who reconciles him to the father. In baptism he is resurrected with the dead man and is received by him:

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Rom. 6:4)

To Paul baptism is the rebirth in the father, while the mother's part is reduced to the symbol of water.

The dark, tormented Paul must have renounced the identification with the first-born, the happy smiling child on its mother's lap. He bowed to the grown-up, crucified man, to whom he acknowledged the right to be God's only son. The identification with the crucified through whose sacrificial death he will reach the father gives his religious message a stamp of heroic suffering and self-effacement. Eros is transformed into Agape - love without lust. The contact with everything living gets looser. The individual does no longer possess its dynamic vitality. Man becomes abstractions and symbol. In this attenuated atmosphere, in the border land between life and death, Hanns Sachs holds, lives the religious genius and the martyr: "Life is no longer life, it is a constant dying in becoming one with the crucified. Death is no longer death for him who became one with the resurrected first born of God. Paul expresses this complicated

process in simple and perfectly clear words: "For I died by means of the law, so that I will live with Jehova. I have been crucified together with the Messiah. I live no longer, but the Messiah lives in me." (Galatians II, 19.)

\* \* \*

There seem to be two ways to conquer death. One is through identification with the resurrected dead man and through the admittance that one is not, after all, the first born of God. The other is through identification with the living child who is forever united with his mother in full assurance of her love. It is obvious that these different solutions will lead to fundamentally different outlooks of life. Eros will have another destiny if one dies with the son to reach the father, or if one identifies oneself with the phallic child in happy reunion with the mother.

But even the child whose life is marked by the unconscious fantasy of being his mother's penis longs for nearness and identification with the father. But he is not forced to make the *détour* through identification with an elder brother. The father's image is continuously latent in the phallic conception, which, after all, is a bisexual fantasy. When mother and child, liberated from sin and fear of death, are soaring happily upwards in an infinite universe, the Scriptures proclaim that God is awaiting them in heaven and will receive them lovingly.

Joseph's dream, which followed after a period of agony, anxiousness and confusion, tells that the son who is happy on his mother's lap will nevertheless grow away from her into likeness to his father.

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*Litterature.*

- 1) Hanns Sachs: At the gates of heaven. Masks of Love and Life. Sci. Art. 1948.
- 2) Thomas Mann: Das Gesetz. Auskewählte Erzählungen. Bermann-Fischer Verlag 1948.
- 3) B. Berenson: Aesthetics and History. Doubleday 1954.
- 4a) A. Köstler: The Invisible Writing. Collins 1944.
- 4b) A. Köstler: Dialogue with Death. Gollanez 1938.
- 5) op. cit. Zenta Maurina: Dostojewski. Diakonistyrelsens Forl. 1957.
- 6) F. Dostojewski: Idioten. Swed. translation. Bonniers 1954.
- 7) op. cit. Zenta Maurina.
- 8) Cavendish Square, London 1952. reproduced in Epstein: An Autobiography. Hulton Press 1955.

## Sidelights on Freud's "Psychopathology of Everyday Life"

by

Bronson Feldman

One of the most popular of Freud's books, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1904) has served more to illuminate the dynamics of common errors and accidents for clinical purposes than to establish the main bonds between abnormal and normal psychology, which was the writer's aim in producing this first guide, so to say, to oblivion. The book has also provided his biographers and critics with abundance of material concerning himself. As a fund of information about Freud's privacy it runs second only to *The Interpretation of Dreams*. The latter has naturally received far more attention for its revelation of unconscious currents and devices, since it charts in fact the chief path to the realm of fundamental mind. Everyday psychopathology however does more to make us feel at home on the frontiers of oblivion.

Unfortunately the book still circulates in the translation by A. A. Brill (1914), which is not only too often inadequate but even wrong. (For example, take the sentence on the foundations of mythology in Chapter VII: "It is universally admitted that in the origin of the traditions and folklore of a people care must be taken to eliminate from memory such a motive as would be painful to the national feeling." What Freud meant of course is that the national feeling takes the care to eliminate from memory the painful theme. The footnote on Bernard Shaw's distortion of history in his comedy *Caesar and Cleopatra*—also in Chapter VII—leaves in Brill's English the impression that Freud approved what Shaw did.) No doubt, the Standard Edition of Freud's works published in England now gives us a faithful text (Volume VI); but it

will be a long time before it reaches the audience that learnt and still learns its abc of Freudian psychology from the older version.

My purpose in this paper is to throw some light on various concepts and mechanisms discussed in the book, extending the analysis beyond the points where Freud left off. It is my hope that the following notes will contribute to the better understanding of the laws and the vagaries of free or preconscious association.

# 1

Chapter I, "The Forgetting of Proper Names," deals with Freud's failure to recall the name of Luca Signorelli, the painter of the frescoes in the church of Orvieto and one of the masters who worked before Michelangelo on the Sistine Chapel. The memory failure is traced to a repression of painful thoughts about sexuality and death. This repression affected Freud's thinking on the names of certain places in Yugoslavia, names which reminded him by syllable or assonance of the pathetic thoughts. In his unwillingness to recall these thoughts the geographic names suffered disturbance which would not permit the painter's name, syllabically associated with them, to emerge to consciousness. The stream of ideas that preceded his effort to remember Signorelli's name, Freud remarks (toward the end of Chapter II), had no distinct relation to the theme containing the artist's name. "Between the repression and the theme of the forgotten name," says he, "there existed only the relation of a touching in time," a coincidence of external forms that permitted the linking of the two. But a footnote on this sentence retracts its claim: "I am not fully convinced," Freud added, "that an inner connection is lacking between the two currents of thought in the Signorelli case. On carefully following the repressed idea concerning the theme of death and sexual life, one does strike an idea that shows a near relation to the theme of the frescoes of Orvieto."

The theme of those frescoes is not stated in the *Psycho-*

*pathology*. It is the ultimate judgment of the dead by God according to Christian eschatology. The Orvieto pictures are notable in the history of art for the use of nudity in which Luca Signorelli was a pioneer. He was the first artist to employ nakedness as his primary means of pictorial expression, to reveal emotion by the twisting of muscles in the torso rather than in the face. The painter's fondness for the nude prompted him even to portray his dead son thus.

But the forgetting of the painter's name had more than an esthetic frame of reference. Freud leaves it to us to determine the motives of egoism that disposed him to so forget Signorelli. Immediately apparent is the identity of the first syllable of his own name with the Sig that begins the artist's name. The latter's meaning in Italian is "little mister." At the time of Freud's failure to recall it he was suffering from the mortification of belittlement which the medical men of Vienna had subjected him to on account of his invention of psychoanalysis. Feelings of chagrin over his physical shortness may have augmented the pangs of his castration complex thus provoked. In the complex are merged the repressed topics of sexuality and death.

It was in the summer of 1898 that Freud visited Orvieto and saw the powerful Signorelli frescoes in the church there. He wrote to his admired friend Wilhelm Fliess (on September 22) that they presented the finest vision of the Last Judgment he had ever seen. In the same letter Freud analysed the temporary amnesia of the painter's name. "Only *Signor* was repressed," he observed. He knew that Fliess was well aware of the way physicians in Austria officially ignored Sigmund Freud.

The lapse of memory occurred early in September 1898, while the founder of psychoanalysis was traveling from the port of Ragusa on the Yugoslavian coast into the barbaric scenes of Herzegovina. On the road he met a stranger, one Freyhan, a lawyer from Berlin, and they had an interesting conversation about the posture of the Turks toward death and their feeling that life is worthless without the joys of sex. During the talk Freud wished to mention the masterworks

he had seen at Orvieto and found himself unable to remember the name of the master who painted them. On analysing his lapse he remembered that he had begun the journey from Ragusa under a cloud of sadness on account of a message he had received a few weeks before, the report of a suicide committed by a patient on whom he had spent much labor in vain. The man had killed himself in despair of curing a sexual malady. Freud had not wished to recall this death, this "last judgment," and the price he paid for the refusal was the forgetting of other facts connecting sexuality and death.

The physician was at that time struggling to heal himself of a mild psychoneurosis, whose two outstanding symptoms were *Reisefieber*—travel fever: an excessive tension evoked especially in railroad stations and other decisive points on journeys—and *Todesangst*—death-anxiety. Never in public, in his books, did Freud associate these two affects. Thanks to his own researches and science, we can link them together today, interpreting the travel fever as the result of his repression of a certain lust that prevailed over his unconscious in childhood, an appetite for a lost tit. It appears that he never completely recovered from the deprivation of his Roman Catholic nurse before he was two and a half years old. This otherwise unknown Czech woman he later described as the "only begetter" of his neurosis:\* "an ugly, elderly but clever woman who told me a great deal about God and hell, and gave me a high opinion of my own capacities." Her image must have been unconsciously conjured up when the analyst stood looking at Signorelli's "Last Judgment" and felt how he had failed to live up to her dream of his greatness in manhood. The memory of this woman became inextricable from the memory of his mother. In a letter to Fliess of February 9, 1898, he refers to the mingling of their figures in his dreams: "my nurse (my mother)." The nurse

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\* The phrase "only begetter" was borrowed from the dedication of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. It is translated "primary originator" in the letters to Wilhelm Fliess (3 October 1897).

was dismissed from his service when his parents discovered that she was thieving things from their home. The event of her vanishing associated in his passionate thought with the birth of his sister Anna (December 31, 1858) and impressions of his mother's pregnancy, which in turn became bound with libidinal visions of his mother's nudity, first seen, according to his autoanalysis, on a train journey with her from Leipzig to Vienna, which he dated "between the ages of two and two-and-a-half." And the memory of this nakedness he connected with his infantile jealousy at the birth of his brother Julius when he was only one year old. Little Julius died at the age of eight months. "His death," wrote Freud forty years after, "left the germ of guilt in me." In the letter to Fliess recollecting these unhappy far-off things (October 3, 1897) Freud expressed the hope of resolving his neurosis, which he diagnosed as hysteria, by means mainly of probing and interpreting his dreams. If I succeed, he said, "I shall have to thank the memory of the old woman who provided me at such an early age with the means for living and surviving. You see how the old affection breaks thru again." Possibly her image rose again in his oblivion during the conversation with Freyhan, for the first syllable of the lawyer's name surely made him think of his birthplace, Freiberg, a name inseparable from that of his family.

When Freud travelled with his wife to Ragusa on August 31, 1898 he experienced not only anguish over his insignificance on the stage of European science but also the fear of the artist that he would die before he had given birth to his masterworks. "My disorientation," he confessed to Fliess that day, "is complete." To the rescue of the hysterical psychiatrist there came his wonderful faculty of humor. He conquered his oral fever of envy and craving for fame by laughing quietly at himself. In the same letter to Fliess he refers to the famous operetta of Gilbert and Sullivan, *The Mikado*, which had made a strangely profound impression on him. He alluded to the play, which came out in England in 1885, in his first book, the *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) where he compares the unconscious mechanism of displacement to

the appearance of "an opera prince disguised as a beggar." He was thinking of Gilbert's hero Nanki-Pooh. The passage was written sometime between March 4 and March 13, 1895, the very time when he was acknowledging to his friend Fliess a desire to die young—"relatively." I suppose that he had somewhere in mind when he uttered this desire the memory of the wandering minstrel Prince Nanki-Pooh, traveling in rags and willing to die young if only he could spend his last days in possession of the mouth-watering charms of Yum-Yum.

## 2

The second example of the daily pathology of memory analysed by Freud (Chapter II of the *Everyday Life*) is entitled Aliquis, after the Latin word forgotten by a friend of the author in the course of a talk about the future of Jewish youth in Austria. The young man had wished to quote Vergil's lines on the curse that Dido, Queen of Carthage, pronounced on Aeneas and his descendants, the founders of the city of Rome. These lines of the *Aeneid* were manifestly favored among collegiate Jews in central Europe because of their identification of the pagan Rome of Vergil's poem with the Catholic metropolis which exerted so mighty an influence in the affairs of Austria. Carthage, the ancient stronghold of the Phoenician Semites, appealed to them as a symbol of Jewish conflict with the Roman Church and its politics. In Vergil's epic the Queen of Carthage prays: "Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor. . ." (Let some avenger rise from our bones, who will pursue these Trojan travelers with fire and sword.) The word for "some" (aliquis) was forgotten by Freud's young friend, because it suggested to his unconscious some unpleasant ideas concerning the feminine liquidation of the menstrual period and his wish to avoid having posterity, including a son to avenge the antisemitic outrages on his people.

Freud's own alacrity in remembering the epic line is worth our study. He could never forget it, since it alluded, in the belief of many Latin scholars, to the Carthaginian gen-

eral Hannibal who was a hero of his boyhood and youth. He speaks in Chapter X of the *Psychopathology* of the "Hannibal fantasies" he enjoyed while at college. When he entered the University of Vienna in 1873 he saw antisemitism flourishing there. "Above all," he remarks in his *Autobiography*, "I found that I was expected to feel myself inferior and an alien because I was a Jew." Daydreaming over Hannibal and Queen Dido consoled him for the indignities he endured under the Roman Catholic government of the school. Readers of *The Interpretation of Dreams* are familiar with Freud's hero-worship of Hannibal and his father, Hamilcar Barca. "Few readers of the book," he wrote, "are better informed on the history of the Barcides than the author. . ."

What I wish to point out is that Freud's ability to remember Dido's prayer stems from a source more personal than his pride in Judaism or militancy for the sake of "Semitism." His enthusiasm for Hannibal goes no farther back than his tenth year. The Vergil verses however must have conjured up older memories and evoked passions from psychic stigmata of his earliest years. The context of the remembered line gives us the evidence of this. Directly after uttering her cry for vengeance, Queen Dido turns to old Barce, the nurse of her late husband Sichaeus, and asks her to summon the princess Anna to her, prepared for a ritual sacrifice. In the course of this ceremony she kills herself, declaring incidentally that she is glad she executed her brother for the murder of Sichaeus (*Aeneid*, Book IV). Now the names of Dido's sister and her husband call to mind Sigmund and the Annas in his own family. The Queen's unfriendly brother reminds me of Freud's half-brother Philipp, whom he has portrayed for us (at the close of Chapter IV) exhibiting fraternal glee over the infant Sigmund's agony on account of an imagined imprisonment of his mother. The royal nurse Barce probably stimulated Freud's memory of the old woman who had maternally assisted his mother in his first years, and who had gone to prison for theft. She was a Romanist in her religion and his devotion to her doubtless stirred up in his unconscious numerous counter-impulses to the family

loyalty to "Semitism." For her sake, I dare say, he burned all his youth with an unslakable thirst for the fountains of antiquity in Italy, in particular a desire to make at least one pilgrimage to Rome. From this point of view Freud's fidelity to Judaism appears a reaction-formation against his deep temptation to find comfort in the church of his alter-mater.

The chain of ideation indicated here leads us to consider that the father of psychoanalysis had identified himself in oblivion not only with the dead Sicheus but with Dido the Queen. This will not surprise students of his correspondence with Wilhelm Fliess, in which Freud alludes to his peculiar passion for friendship that he deemed "perhaps feminine" (May 7, 1900). Erik Erikson has followed the reasoning of this confession and its testimonies in the Fliess correspondence to a brilliant conclusion in his analysis of Freud's first extensive dream-interpretation in print. (See the *Bulletin of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, January 1953.) We shall see another witness of Freud's conception of himself as feminine in note number 4 below.

In concluding this note I would like to draw attention to the fact that Freud took his rubric for the title-page of *The Interpretation of Dreams* from Vergil's epic: "If I cannot bend (to my will) the powers above I will raise hell (literally, move Acheron)."

## 3

Chapter III of Freud's volume presents an example of the forgetting of poetry reported by A. A. Brill. The young woman in the case had unconsciously connected Keats's Ode to Apollo with a handsome fortune-hunter she once loved. Brill's investigation is concerned with the general intent of her quotation or rather misquotation from Keats and the line that she substituted: "Prosaic truths that came too late." Other distortions of the poem are overlooked. The young woman said "house" instead of "halls," "livest" in place of "sittest," and "once" not "erst." I would suggest that her ideal of purity compelled these changes, because the forgotten words of Keats had raised in her id images of the fecal

closet. Thinking of money in connection with marriage had caused her enough pain. The reluctance of the very young to think of their heroes or gods in the act of defecation is well known. Jonathan Swift showed the aversion persisting into old age.

## 4

Freud reported a sudden inability on his part to remember the name of the small country whose capital is Monte Carlo. He traced the phonetic links between the substitute names that he recalled but gives no clue to the cause of his amnesia. Finally he did remember the name: Monaco (Chapter V). It is now possible to determine the motive of forgetting in this instance. The difficulty in remembering "Monaco" resulted from the pain and the repressed pleasure which were associated in his thought with the semblant name of the city of Munich. Freud admits this in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, No. VI.

We know that Munich signified to him important meetings with his dear friend from Berlin, Dr. Wilhelm Fliess, against whom he secretly cherished the rancorous wishes of a protegee incapable of revolt. "There is hardly anything to which I am so hostile," he states in Chapter VII of the *Psychopathology*, "as the thought of being some one's protegee." Moreover he envied Fliess's discovery of the bisexual essence of human nature. When he betrayed Fliess's secret theory to young students of sex in his own circle he discovered how profoundly he envied his friend, precisely like a sibling who has had to surrender his mother's breast to a brother, or her bed to his father. The filial ambivalence excited by the mention of Munich carried down in its repression the memory of similar sounding names. Freud remained cordially attached to each of the towns where he used to meet Fliess for hours of delicious talk together. When the International Psychoanalytic Association was organized, it held its first congresses in the same towns. Freud was fond of calling his own encounters with Fliess "congresses." He was sufficiently acquainted with the erotic sense of the word.

Munich, by the way, plays a minor part in the first dream ever analysed by Freud in public, the dream of "Irma's Injection," which Erikson has shown contains implicitly the story of Freud's affection for the paternal Fliess. Associations to the dream recall a visit to Munich to see Fliess who was then seriously ill. The secrets of this dream were disclosed to Freud on July 24, 1895. In August of the year before Freud wrote to his friend expressing gratitude for a "congress" they had held that month in Munich—"the delightful flavor of the days in Munich still lingering in my mind."

Readers of Ernest Jones's biography of Freud will recollect the fainting spell that seized the father of psychoanalysis in Munich in November 1912, after a scene of antagonism with his rebel protege Carl Jung. On December 8 Freud confided to Jones the libidinal meaning of his swoon: "I cannot forget that six and four years ago I suffered from very similar tho not such intense symptoms in the *same* room of the Park Hotel. I saw Munich first when I visited Fliess during his illness and this town seems to have acquired a strong connexion with my relation to that man. There is some piece of unruly homosexual feeling at the root of the matter." The father felt unmanned by the insurrection of the son, just as Fliess's sickness appears to have excited Freud's id with images of his own guilty desire to supplant in science and glory the temporarily unmanned master from Berlin. When Freud woke from his faint in Munich his first words were: "How sweet it must be to die." Another indication that the idea of dying had some sexual meaning for him, perhaps equivalent to emasculation and consequently reconciliation and getting along (coitus) with the father. The depth of Freud's devotion to his chief Christian disciple, Carl Jung, remains to be explored by psychoanalytic method.

## 5

In Chapter VII, "Forgetting of Impressions," Freud refers to an error he made in pronouncing the title of the first book by another "son" of his. He speaks of *Der Künstler*

(1907) without naming its author—young Otto Rank. The subtitle of that book, by means of which, he comments, “a young student had recently gained admittance to the circle of my pupils,” is *Versuch einer Sexualpsychologie*. Freud said “Ansätze” instead of “Versuch.” The word he employed may be translated “efforts” and connotes a more strenuous, aggressive attitude than the customary modest *Versuch*, meaning attempt. Maybe Freud experienced and repressed a twinge of resentment at the bold “onset” of Otto Rank in psychoanalysis.

## 6

In the exposition of the significance of accidental breakages (Chapter VIII, “Actions Erroneously Performed”) Freud describes how he struck down a statue of Venus in his house after learning that there had been a great improvement in the condition of a very sick girl in his family. He sacrificed the statue in grateful superstition, exchanging the idol for the soul of the beloved girl. The choice of the Venus, says Freud, “was only gallant homage to the convalescent.” As the statue broke he recited a rime about the loss of the Venus of Medici, thus indicating that the sick one shone in his unconscious as a love-divinity whom he had wished to dethrone. The “medicine” man who devoted his life to the mental fight for instinctual renunciation could not help but feel like a foe to Venus, whose name is practically equivalent, at least in old medical scriptures, to syphilis. (Cf. the maxim, One hour with Venus may mean a lifetime with Mercury.) It seems that Freud had also prayed obliviously for liberation from his love for the ill girl. One is reminded of his admission in an afterthought on the dream of Irma’s Injection: “I do not treat Irma and my wife very gallantly in this dream, but let it be said for my excuse that I am judging both of them by the standard of the courageous, docile female patient.” We are not told how the convalescent had behaved for whom he knocked down the idol.

## 7

In the same chapter we have an incisive examination of

the process of falling in cases where no external precipitant can be proved. Freud points out the *double entendre* in the popular use of the word "fall," especially when women do the falling. His remark on the making of missteps in this connexion calls to mind the lines of Robert Burns pleading for tolerance of sexual faults: "To step aside is human." Freud quotes a proverb stating "When a maiden falls, she falls on her back." He could have supported his argument with a witness from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. The heroine's nurse in the play makes a considerable word-fuss over her memory of Juliet's falling as a child, when her husband had remarked, "Thou wilt fall backward when thou art older, wilt thou not, Jule?" And the little girl answered, Ay.

In Jack London's prehistoric novel *Before Adam* (1907) there is a genetic theory offered to explain the universal dream of falling from a height. London suggests that the dreamers of such falls are thereby remembering how their arboreal ancestors had been scared of dropping from the primeval security of the trees. The late Otto Rank, we suspect, might have traced this falling dream to the trauma of birth. In any case we have to distinguish the unconscious conceptions of fall thru space and falling to *terra firma*; it is the latter that carries erotic significance. The other sort of falling belongs to the anguished fantasies which Freud was inclined to consider exceptions to the rule of dream-interpretation that the dream in general is a fulfilment of an infantile wish.

## 8

Among the wrongly executed acts of Freud one gave him quite a scare. He mistakenly dropt morphine instead of a prescribed lotion into an aged patient's eyes. Analysis of the fault made him think at once of the phrase, "To catch the old woman by mistake," which he quickly associated with the Oedipus complex. He comments on "The strangeness of the fact that the Oedipus legend takes no offense at the age of Queen Jocasta," the hero's mother. Now there

is nothing in the Greek legend to indicate that Jocasta was an old woman. Her first husband, Laius, is depicted as aged but still able to combat young Oedipus when their chariots block each other's path on the road to Thebes. The queens of ancient Greece married in early youth (precisely like Shakespeare's Juliet, who became a bride at fourteen). Freud's idea that he had mistaken his old patient for his mother because of a memory picture of the young Mrs. Amalia Freud inherited from his childhood leaves out of reckoning the likelihood that *mother* to him meant not only the beautiful Amalia but the aged and ugly Gentile nurse of his babyhood. It was this bewitching creature whom the analyst endeavored to extinguish from his id-heritage. Anyhow he hoped to put her to sleep—in the arms of the god Morpheus.

## 9

Chapter X tells a curious story of Freud's failure to take a train that he required to get him swiftly out of Holland without having to spend one day there. Actually he desired to idle away a day among the Dutch. He had journeyed from Munich thru the city of Koln (Cologne), where according to a family tradition his ancestors had lived in Roman times, and been exiled to the east by German persecution. A feeling of piety (nostalgia?) made him contemplate an overnight stay in Koln. Instead he took a train to Rotterdam and by happy error spent a day fulfilling a long-fostered wish to see the paintings of Rembrandt at the Hague and in Amsterdam. He does not inform us whether his ardor for Rembrandt was kindled by the artist's lifelong interest in the faces and postures of Jews. Freud was going to England at the time to pay his brother Emanuel a long due visit, and the feeling of fidelity to his family was strong in him thru the entire trip. Love for the family naturally turns into love for one's nation or race. Guilt over infidelity to the family often turns into religious sentiment or piety. Brother Emanuel played a major role in Freud's "Hannibal fantasies," as we know from this Chapter X in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and from the volume on dreams.

## 10

The main things we learn from the additional analysis of the errors of Freud investigated are (1) that even in simple daily forgetting there is more than "external association" or phonetic linking of affective terms; (2) that pain is seldom found without repressed pleasure in the motivation of forgetting and mistake-making—which leads me to query whether memory itself is not a faculty of ambivalence; (3) that the "self-reference" at the bottom of errors unconsciously provoked relates to the ego-ideal or the conscience rather than the ego proper, which is usually victimized ("betrayed") by these misdeeds and failures of memory; and (4) the superego provides the chief obstruction to free association, preferring fantasy, random thought, and rationalization to unrestricted mental work, which promises to dethrone it.

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# Free Association and Ego Function in Creativity:<sup>\*</sup>

## A Study of Content and Form in Art

by

Jacques Schnier

Since the discovery of psychoanalysis much has been written on the role of free association or free expression in art. Investigations along psychoanalytic lines now reveal that this mental activity is one of the essential processes by which the artist and scientist creates. By enabling the creative mind to roam the mental highways and byways unhampered by conscious restrictions, free association provides it with a flow of ideas and impressions, relationships and patterns, and a world of imagery unattainable by merely intellectually directed efforts alone.

This principal, frequently referred to as automatism in the literature of art criticism, has come to be so thoroughly accepted and integrated in the general philosophy of much of our contemporary art that it seems to have dwarfed into insignificance the other aspects of creativity. We hear much of free art, automatic art, the stream of consciousness, unloosening the emotions, pouring out the soul, and expressing inner feelings. So much so, that the impression is created that organization, design, sustained composition, mature control of medium, the element of communication, or any of the other synonymous expressions by which the term "form" is referred to, is of considerably less importance for the artist, the spectator, or the work of art itself.

When we investigate the historical background of this

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disparate emphasis on emotional elements in contrast to "form" in certain schools of modern art, we find first that even long before the advent of psychoanalysis, artists themselves had already recognized the essential nature of this feature for creative work. For example, in 1857, Garth Wilkenson, a minor poet, described what he called a new method for writing creative poetry. "A theme is chosen or written down," he stated; "as soon as this is done the first impression upon the mind which succeeds the act of writing the title is the beginning of the evolution of that theme, no matter how strange or alien the word or phrase may seem. The first mental movement, the first word that comes is the response to the mind's desire for the unfolding of the subject." Wilkenson adds that he has "always found this method to lead by an infallible instinct into the subject" he was writing on. The method as he viewed it was a kind of exalted *laissez-faire*, a command to the deepest unconscious instincts to express themselves. Reason and will, he pointed out, are left aside; you trust to "an influx" of thoughts and the faculties of the mind are "directed to ends they know not of." (1)

Prior to Wilkenson, we have Schiller's correspondence (1788) with Körner in which the great poet advised his friend how to overcome what he claimed was a lack of creative power. In his letter Schiller contends that it hinders the creative work of the mind if reason examines too closely the ideas as they come pouring in. Regarded in isolation, an idea may appear to be quite insignificant, irrelevant and far-fetched; but in juxtaposition with other ideas which may seem equally absurd, it may be capable of establishing a meaningful link and acquire considerable importance in an artistic sense. In the case of the creative mind, the intellect withdraws its critical observation of all thoughts and so permit a pell-mell rush of ideas to the surface. (2)

It should be evident then that psychoanalysis cannot claim to have discovered the free association technique or its relation to creativity. In fact, Freud himself attributed the probable inspiration for his psychoanalytic technique to the writing of Ludwig Börne who in 1823 published an essay on

the application of free-association to creative writing. Börne's now famous lines are: "Take a few sheets of paper and for three days on end write down, without fabrication or hypocrisy, everything that comes into your heads. Write down what you think of yourself, of your wife, of the Turkish War, of Goethe, of Fonk's trial, of the Last Judgment, of your superiors — and when three days have passed you will be quite out of your senses with astonishment at the new and unheard of thoughts you have had. This is the art of becoming an original writer in three days." (3) Börne had been a favorite author of Freud's; when he was fourteen years old he had been given a present of his collected works, and they were the only books he preserved from his adolescent years. He recollected half a century later many passages from the volume in which the essay in question is to be found. So we may be sure that Börne's startling proposal had made a strong impression on Freud's mind and played its part twenty years later in stimulating him to make his own epochal creative discoveries.

The principle of free association as conceived and applied by psychoanalysis for uncovering repressed unconscious processes of the mind is practically identical with that described by Schiller, Börne, or Wilkenson for creating works of art. An individual employing this method in analysis is first required to put himself in a condition of calm, self-observation without trying to think of anything. Then he begins to say everything which he becomes inwardly aware of — feelings, thoughts, remembrances, and so forth — in the order in which they arise in his mind. It is imperative that he avoid any tendency to be selective or to exclude any ideas whether they are too disagreeable, too indiscreet, too unimportant, or too non-sensical to mention. All he has to attend to is that which is on the surface of his conscious mind and to abandon all objections to what he finds, no matter what form or what reasoning these objections might take.

The word "free" in "free association" carries no philosophical implications. It does not imply that such associations are exempt from cause and effect relationships, or from the

directing influences of certain psychological forces. It implies rather a freedom from any deliberate interference, whether preconscious or conscious, with the spontaneity of the stream of thought itself; that is to say, from any deliberate selection or rejection as to which of the elements of that stream will be communicated.

In the case of free association, as used by certain schools of contemporary painting and sculpture, an almost similar description applies as in its use by psychoanalysis. As Paul Klee expressed it in capsule form, "In art, the heart must do its work undisturbed by reflected consciousness." Standing before his canvas or block of stone, the artist turns from all tendencies to report the experiences of sense perceptions, i.e. to report on the world of objects about him, and gives precedence instead, to the feelings, thoughts, remembrances, and impulses as they arise in his mind. Any color, shape, line or balancing arrangement as it comes to the surface of consciousness is acted upon and incorporated in the work (later, these elements may or may not be retained). No motive, irrespective of how bizarre or abstract, is considered unimportant. Although free association is probably an ingredient of all creative activity, it plays an especially prominent role in a number of specific modern art movements, such as Expressionism, Orphism, Surrealism, Action Painting, and Abstract Expressionism. The surrealist's manifesto, for example, admonishes its adherents to draw from the darkest abyss of their instincts those impulses which have been ignored by the tacit consent of society and to give expression to the painful, disquieting, exciting metamorphosis of the unconscious. Instead of shrinking from them, dreams and hallucinations are to be given an honored place in their art. "I maintain", wrote Andre Breton, the father of Surrealism, "that graphic automatism, no less than verbal - apart from the fact that it brings to light deep individual tensions and to some extent releases them - is the one and only mode of expression entirely satisfying to both eye and ear . . . No work can claim to be surrealist unless the artist has done his best to embrace in it the whole psychopathic field, of which the field of con-

sciousness forms but a trifling part. Freud has proved that at this "abysmal" depth, contradictions no longer exist as such, the nuclei of emotions due to repression are in a constant flux, external reality is replaced by psychic reality dominated solely by the libido and time is no more." (4)

Certain artists seem to go as far as to assign to creativity the exclusive function of being a means as well as a product of their free associations. In abstract expressionism, for example, free association seems to constitute the very essence of creativity; unhampered by any tendency to conscious planning, the artist gives himself up entirely to the free expression of his associations through the use of abstract shapes and colors. Generally speaking we can think of all contemporary art which is characterized by an irrational, non-contextual arrangement of material, irrespective of whether this material is figurative or non-figurative, as resulting from a preoccupation with the free association approach to creativity.

Now the function of the free association technique in psychoanalysis is, among other things, to explore the unconscious mind. In so doing the buried, hidden facets of character, behavior and the depths of the "soul" are uncovered. In art, free association serves somewhat the same purpose by providing access to the artist's inner mind. We know that during this phase, resistance is overcome and the result is a flow of associated thoughts and images characterized by symbolism, condensation and displacement, the distinguishing features of the primary process. Defences are broken down to a greater or lesser degree and repression is reduced.

There are innumerable references in early literature to this passive phase of artistic creativity. As might be expected, however, since visual artists are less prone than writers and poets to record descriptions of their mental processes during creative work, most of our records are from the pens of the latter. Coleridge in his figure of the Eolian Harp creates a highly effective image which continues to serve in the literature of art criticism as an exposition of the passive phase:

And that simplest Lute,  
Placed length-ways of the clasping casement, hark!  
How by the desultory breeze carress'd,

.....  
.....  
Full many a thought uncall'd and undetain'd  
And many idle flitting phantasies,  
Traverse my indolent passive brain,  
As wild and various as the random gales  
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute!<sup>5</sup>

Artists commonly speak of calling up images, designs, words, or ideas as if they came from a deep well in their mind. When images are not available the well is thought empty — a condition referred to as “drained dry of ideas”. This inaccessible feature regarding ideas, images or patterns is usually due to the depth to which they have been submerged (repressed). If stored just below consciousness they can be recalled more or less readily; when deeply submerged, i.e., truly unconscious, they can not be easily brought up at every whim or wish of the artist. Actually, the unconscious cannot be turned on and off like a television set. The artist must frequently wait until ideas and motifs condescend to come up of their own accord. But of all devices to assist this recall, none excels the method of free association.

Investigation discloses that the unconscious is the inexhaustible reservoir of the artist's passions and feelings, the nature of which are those of all men. In literary, figurative, or symbolic terminology these passions are frequently described as related to our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the great category of the forces of nature, wind and calm, storm and sunshine, heat and cold and the eternal cycle of the seasons. They are also related to feelings of elation and despair, hope and sorrow, gratitude and selfishness, mysticism, spirituality, and the godhead. But extensive as has been the concept of the unconscious in the past, it is only recently that any scientific explanation of it has been established.

Our knowledge of the unconscious (now called the “id”) dates from its successful exploration by modern psy-

chology, specifically, psychoanalysis. Examination of this buried stratum of the mind discloses it to be extremely primitive in nature, closely akin to that of both the infant and the savage, and the source of the most primordial instincts of man. Here lies stored the entire range of the artist's passions referred to earlier, but which in non-symbolic terminology are designated as those of birth and death, love and hate, sex, incest and perversion, parricide and matricide, destruction, violence, castration, hunger and greed, jealousy, sadism and masochism. As much as we may abhor most of these passions, they are undisputably the basis of the greatest masterpieces of art. They relate to the forbidden, the unattainable, the socially condemned, the repressed, and for this reason culture and conscience permits them to be present only in disguised or distorted forms completely beyond easy recognition. Nevertheless it takes little probing below the surface of recognized masterpieces to disclose their presence. Sophocles' "Oedipus Rex," Shakespeare's "Hamlet" (6) and Van Gogh's sun compositions (7) are all erected on the firm foundation of these unconscious passions. And whether lightly or heavily disguised in symbolic elements, these passions, reflected in the artist's free associations and expressed in his work, represent the very content of his art.

Content alone, however, does not constitute the whole of artistic creation. Many forms of human behavior are replete with unconscious contents yet have no artistic value whatsoever. Dreams, neurotic symptoms, asocial behavior, juvenile delinquency and psychopathology, are all recognized today as manifestations of id impulses and, therefore, to have "content". But in creativity there are other distinguishing features as well. A common description of art creation conceives of it as being composed of at least two phases: the first in which something within the artist causes ideas, images or patterns to appear, and the second, the working out of these ideas. The former, whatever it be called - inspiration, intuition, the gift of the gods - moves the artist and appears independent of any voluntary act. This is the phase of free association in which images and ideas flow out from the un-

conscious. The second phase pertains to the forming and developing - the synthesizing, so to speak - of the material received from unconscious sources. It involves experience, technical skill and compositional ability. "In the case of the creative mind," wrote Schiller, "reason has withdrawn its watch upon the gates, and the ideas rush in pell-mell, and only then does it review and inspect the multitude." This "reviewing and inspection" is as essential an ingredient of the creative process, as is the bountiful flow of ideas themselves. Coleridge also was well aware of the two phases of creativity and, as stated by David Beres, "did not accept the concept so widely held up to that time that the mind was a passive recipient of sensory impressions and that the function of the artist was to imitate either nature herself or a Platonic ideal. He saw in the imagination an active creative force and he distinguished between fancy and imagination, the former corresponding closely to what in psychoanalytic terminology is the imagery of the primary process, the latter suggesting the secondary process . . . . He introduces into his concept of imagination what corresponds to the synthetic function in psychoanalysis, in language that is startling in its similarity to the language of psychoanalysis. . . 'The poet, described in *ideal* perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination.' " (8) Shakespeare too, as seen in the following lines, recognized the two-fold nature of creation — content and form. Although he employed a different terminology than Coleridge (Shakespeare's term "imagination" refers to fancy or content whereas with Coleridge, the term "imagination" denotes form) his concept of the differentiation between content and form is identical with that of the latter.

" . . . as imagination bodies forth  
The form of things unknown, the poet's pen

Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing  
A local habitation and a name."

*A Midsummer Night's Dream* V, 1, 7

Free associations of the fancy can of course, be given expression without design or composition, that is, without form. An artist in a moment of intense emotion may take a canvas and deliberately splash it with colors, personally satisfied that his activity is a free expression of inner thoughts. Or a sculptor may obtain keen delight from the symbolic content of an arbitrary grouping of representational or abstract sculpture masses. But if such expressions lack organization, integration, formal design, and are, therefore, incoherent, we are inclined not to call them art, irrespective of their inner content. Similarly, when a child with endless patience piles his blocks or arranges his toys on the nursery floor, although the psychologist insists that the arrangement has emotional content — has symbolic meaning — we are equally insistent that it is not art. And on the psychoanalytic couch an analyzand may abreact his pent up emotional energies through the steady flow of free associations. His feelings might be comparable to the chaotic ecstatic "madness" which Plato compared to the inspirational activity of the artist. To the listener it may be undisputably clear that his free association have contents galore. And yet there would be no question of designating any part of this a work of art.

Because of the similarity in contents of the free associations of emotionally disturbed persons and artists, there has developed the modern myth of the artist as a neurotic. This myth is attributed to psychoanalysis and is reflected in the statements of some psychoanalysts themselves. For example, Edmond Bergler states: "The writer is a neurotic with a self-devised cure which works as long as his writing ability which corresponds to a successful sublimation is not inhibited." (9) Freud, it is true, states that the artist has "an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become a neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctual needs which are too clamorous, . . . So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers

all his interest, and all his libido too, onto the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis." (10) But, nowhere does Freud actually state that neurosis is a condition of artistic creativity. If instinctual impulses become urgent and a neurotic outlet appears imminent, the artist's unconscious defense against them may manifest itself through a work of art. But if an artist is neurotic it is not necessarily for reasons connected with his art.

Actually, in one of his descriptions of the artist, Freud envisages him as having at his command a far greater potential than the non-artist for control of pent up emotional energies. This potential of the artist consists of several features. First of all, he knows how to transform his free associations or his phantasies into symbolic form so that they lose that personal note which grates harshly on strange ears and repulses strange eyes; he knows also how to modify these contents so that their origin in prohibited id sources is not easily detected. Furthermore, and perhaps most important of all for the work of art itself, he possesses that "mysterious ability to mould" his particular id material until it faithfully expresses the ideas of his free imagery. (11)

It should be clear by now that mere free expression or automatism in an art medium, whether this expression be figurative (as in surrealism) or non-figurative (as in abstract expressionism) does not necessarily constitute artistic creativity. What differentiates the creative work from mere catharsis or abreaction of emotions is its form quality, its exquisite unity, its noble harmony like that of a living organism whose parts are in vital and structural relationship to the whole. It is true that at times the power of the artist's pent up emotions burst through the surface tension and explode. Then, as writes Bychowski, "the artistic form becomes disrupted by individual catharsis, so that what originally and consciously was intended for a work of art, becomes more an expression of individual abreaction. Instead of mastery of the artist . . . over the raw material springing from the unconscious, we see him overwhelmed by its overflowing

pressure. In such an aura all the characteristic functions of the creative ego — such as selection, discrimination, mastery, and formation, that is, binding of incoming material by a form — become a task impossible to tackle.” (12) Even child analysts such as Betta Bornstein, emphasize the child’s need to fight against free-association especially in the first phase of latency. “The conscious thought processes can . . . still easily dip into the primary process,” and a particularly strong opposing charge of mental energy from the secondary process is needed to safeguard the hard won intactness of ego functioning. (13)

It is the secondary process that enables the artist to bind or control his free associations, i.e., to bind the content element of his art expression in a form. Through this form he achieves the selection, discrimination, integration, and mastery which characterizes a true work of art. All of this is in the nature of problem-solving behavior, by means of which the private meanings of an activity are integrated into a product of social value. In fact, it is the capacity of the artist for using id derivatives in a socially and historically adequate way which constitutes one of his outstanding characteristics. On the other hand, where id derivatives become overwhelming and mental imagery runs rampant due to the artist’s inability to subject it to form, disastrous effects to his mental life are not uncommon. In schizophrenic art, for example, the disintegration of the form element — the weakening of the organizing features — is said to show direct correlation with the intensity of the psychosis. It is not uncommon to find modern artists who confuse automatisms with a hard won finished work of art, and who claim to have found in Freud’s writings conformation for this conclusion. But nowhere in his writings does Freud actually equate mere free association to a finished work of art.

Investigation of form indicates that whereas content in a work of art is related to the id — the unconscious instinctual urges seeking outlets — the form element is related to the synthesizing processes of the ego. The chaotic eruption of the id contributes dynamic forces to a work of art as well

as opening up avenues of release for seething instinctual urges formerly held under repression. But this eruption must be brought under the control of the ego, under the control of reason, and thus tamed for constructive use. Any analysis of artistic creativity must, therefore, take into account, not only the quality of certain remarkable fancies of the artist dredged from the depths of the unconscious by means of his automatisms, but, also, of the no less remarkable synthesizing features of the ego resulting in a form structure by which he communicates his experiences, and enables them to become ours as well.

Beres, in a sensitive study (14) relates cure in the psychoanalytic situation to the element of communication between analyzand and analyst. He compares at some length this latter feature with communication in the creative process, and illustrates this parallel with many revealing bits of insight taken from the writings of poets and critics. In both instances — therapy and creativity — it is the relative strength and control of the synthesizing ego that determines the degree of success of the undertaking.

The ego of the truly creative artist is such as to be able to maintain control in situations of emotional upheaval by imposing the discipline of form on the insistent clamoring of the id. The subjecting of this raw material from the unconscious to the refining secondary process leading to a finished artistic product becomes the most important function of his ego. The stronger the ego, the better can it achieve this task; the greater its immunity to the chaos and confusion of repressed affects seeking outlet, the greater its ability to create the form in which to house them profitably.

In returning to the question of the emphasis on free expression in contemporary painting and sculpture, we can consider this emphasis as being part of an attempt at exploration — exploration of the unconscious, the inner world of man. Ever since the Renaissance man has turned his interest outwards, learning more and more about the nature of the universe. Concurrently he translated this theoretical knowledge into technological mastery over the natural forces. But

during this period of impressive scientific accomplishment he seems to have given less consideration to the exploration of his inner universe. Consequently he built up an illusion of himself as a progressive, rational, basically benign, and socially minded personality, striving for truth, for the cultivation of beauty, and the realization of social justice; - all of which, of course, was as grossly illusionary as was the formerly held ideas regarding the nature of the universe about him. The artists, writers and philosophers who challenged this rosy picture of man's personality were disregarded or ridiculed by the official academies of culture. But since the beginning of our century this imbalance of interest no longer exists. Man's mental universe — not only the unconscious, but all the institutions of the mind, the ego, the id and the super-ego — have become the foremost territory for psychological exploration. (15) Thus, the overexaggerated interest in the unconscious alone is no longer valid. To create, an artist must give recognition to the invaluable contributions available not only from his id but also from his ego.

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# Dr. Johnson and the Psychiatrists

by

William Kenney

The reputation of Samuel Johnson rests on a fundamental paradox: some critics see him as a typical Englishman, embodying the virtues that come from common sense, religious piety, and an appreciation of humor; others emphasize his abnormalities, his odd gesticulations, and his unusually strong fear of death in order to portray him as one of the most eccentric creatures in literary history. The best current scholarly opinion is a compromise between the two views; George Sherburn admits that Johnson was a "psychological eccentric" but reminds us that "in thinking of him, however, as representative of his period and in some sense of his race, we must not forget to conceive of him as a man of typical *mind*." (1) In spite of his quirks, Johnson's fundamental approach to life and many of his attitudes were those that most people can readily understand.

Almost everyone who has ever written on Johnson has had occasion to examine his grotesque side. Boswell provides the basis for such discussions when he shows Johnson gulping down his food, compulsively counting steps, and becoming hostile under little provocation. But passages concerning Johnson's eccentricities in Boswell's *Life* are comparatively few and are put in perspective by the numerous other aspects of Johnson taken up in that long work. The emphasis on Johnson the oddity actually begins with Thomas B. Macaulay in 1831, when he reviewed John Wilson Croker's edition of the *Life*. Although Macaulay bases his treatment of the eccentricities on Boswell, his comments amount

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1. *A Literary History of England*, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 989.

to a gross distortion because he gives no other side of Johnson. Unfortunately, too many later critics follow Macaulay and treat Johnson as though he were only a great dancing bear whose main function was to provide amusement. Some people who write articles about him do not bother even to read his work, but get their ideas primarily from Boswell as interpreted by Macaulay; thus there is the critic who states, "My own opinion of Johnson, formed, I admit, from what I have read about him, not by him, is that he was a conceited, dictatorial, obstinate, untidy, ill-mannered old glutton and sponge. He was amazingly well-informed, and considering this, along with his tastes and manners, I should class him as a fortunately rare but choice specimen of that pride of the successful showman—the Educated Hog." (2)

Yet it is the psychiatrists, as might be expected, who have found Johnson's abnormalities the most interesting. Psychology has now been generally accepted as providing one of the many valid approaches to literature. Insights suggested by it have often aided in the understanding of what comprises creative genius, particularly when specific works have been examined in such a way as to show how their authors transform their dream worlds into significant interpretations of external reality. (3) But psychiatrists who write about Johnson usually have no goal of esthetic clarification; they generally ignore his works and concentrate solely on his life, using it as a case history. This clinical approach to Johnson, or to any other figure long dead, is based on questionable assumptions.

One psychiatrist, R. Macdonald Ladell, confesses "a fascination in digging into the byeways of history" and finds that "one of the most interesting applications of modern psychology is to use its methods as a means of elucidating the character and personality of people who have played an im-

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2. Charles Hopkins Clark, "The Great Doctor Johnson," *North American Review*, CCXXII (December, 1925), 329-330.
  3. A superior study is that by Daniel E. Schneider, *The Psychoanalyst and the Artist* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1950).

portant part in the world." (4) He even believes that this type of exploration can provide a way of "testing the validity of our psychological theories. If without undue straining we can account for the known actions of a personage by seeing them as determined by his psychology interpreted by modern principles, it allows us to assume that these principles have scientific value." Ladell then turns his attention specifically to Johnson; he uses Boswell's *Life* as a report which can provide him with the facts that will enable him to build a theory. Referring to the desire of Johnson's parents to show their young genius off to visitors and the many other examples of his being set apart because of the quality of his mind, Ladell concludes that he developed an "anxiety hysteria." The final result was that Johnson "discovered himself to be sexually impotent. Denied all outward sex attraction he had concentrated his interests so exclusively on intellectual achievement as to divert the main stream of his libido from its natural goal." (5)

Ladell and others do not seem fully cognizant of the difficulties inherent in this approach. In the first place, knowledge of a man long dead depends upon written records that are necessarily incomplete for the purposes of psychology. A good psychiatrist will never generalize about anyone without having personally examined him, usually at great length over a long period of time. The use of one source, or even a large number of sources, could not possibly be an adequate substitute for first-hand knowledge that can be acquired only through personal contact. Moreover, the reports of Johnson's contemporaries depend to some extent on the personalities of their authors; Boswell's Johnson is not identical with Fanny Burney's or Mrs. Thrale's. In the second place, differences in terminology are considerable. Words change their meanings; Boswell's use of "insanity" is not the same as that of a modern psychiatrist. And psychiatrists

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4. "The Neurosis of Dr. Samuel Johnson," *British Journal of Medical Psychology*, IX (1929), 314.

5. Page 31.

themselves are not in complete agreement on the meaning of the terms in their own jargon.

Another problem arising from the psychoanalytic approach is the grave difficulty in the interpretation of facts. Everyone agrees that Johnson was the victim of a compulsive neurosis that manifested itself, among other ways, in a *tic*. But agreement ends here. Charles MacLaurin finds that "probably all Johnson's psychasthenic involuntary movements, which made him so strange a figure to his contemporaries, took their origin in unconscious memory of some affront to his childish masculinity, such as would be caused by taking him to Queen Anne to be 'touched.' " (6) Edward Hitschmann points to Johnson's huge consumption of tea, his overeating, his habit of biting his nails, and other indications of "oral and anal aggression." (7) His "very severe Superego" caused in Johnson a continual battle between his instincts and his conscience, but his Ego was able to build up the facade of a moralist for the benefit of the external world. Hitschmann is thankful that Johnson was able to restrain his "archaic, very barbarian instincts," for if he had not, "he would have bitten away the nipples of the breasts of his wet-nurse, would have castrated and killed his father, blinded his brother and let him by envy die of hunger, would have committed incest with his mother, slayed some of his enemies and would have died from overeating." (8)

Probably the best discussions of Johnson by a psychiatrist are the two studies by W. Russell Brain. They are notable for their careful analysis and their lack of hasty generalizations. Brain shows how Freud, Adler, and Jung would explain Johnson's compulsive neurosis. (9) Freud would find that the Oedipus complex was at the root of the

6. "Dr. Johnson," *Mere Mortals: Medico-Historical Essays* (New York: Jonathan Cape, 1925), p. 39.

7. "Samuel Johnson's Character: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation," *Psychoanalytic Review*, XXXII (April, 1945), 207-218.

8. Pages 215-216.

9. "A Post-Mortem on Dr. Johnson," *London Hospital Gazette*, XXXVII (May, June, 1934), 225-230, 288-289.

difficulties. He might cite Johnson's marriage to Tetty and his friendship for old women like Mrs. Williams as representing a search for a mother-substitute. Adler, on the other hand, would probably see Johnson as a man suffering from an inferiority complex, caused in part by his poor vision, his scrofula, and his generally unattractive physical appearance. Finally, Jung might emphasize the conflict between his strong rationality and his unruly emotions. In a later study Brain calls Johnson "the Great Convulsionary" and finds that he was obsessed, but that his obsession "was clearly compatible with the greatest intellectual powers and with considerable, if sporadic, energy." (10) Brain realizes, as few of his colleagues do, that Johnson was a very complex personality; he therefore hesitates to commit himself to any one theory.

A more rewarding series of studies is that by scholars whose literary emphasis takes into consideration psychological implications. These critics bring out the tension in Johnson arising from personality conflicts, and they attribute much of his greatness to this inner agony. Walter B. C. Watkins initiated this type of approach in 1939 when he published a study of Swift, Johnson, and Sterne which he called *Perilous Balance*. He finds that all three are profoundly aware of the miserable condition of man, but that each tries to adjust himself to this knowledge in a different way. Swift fails; he surrenders to the terrible disillusion he feels and becomes mad. Sterne cultivates optimism and gaiety. Johnson keeps a precarious balance between his indolence and his imagination, the latter being stimulated by his fear of death. Solitude has its terrors for him; he knows that, although it fosters creative genius, it also leads to lethargy and insanity. Bertrand Bronson develops these ideas. He finds that paradox is at the heart of Johnson's nature, that Johnson's emotional violence conflicts with his conservatism. His revolutionary temperament is out of line with his respect for rules. Thus Johnson's genius is "taut." Our interest in him results from

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10. Authors and Psychopaths," *British Medical Journal*, II (December 1949), 1430.

our feeling that there is a mastery of strongly conflicting emotions: "The opposition of these two forces, the conservatism of intellectual attitude and the ebullient temperament, is at the root of most of his inconsistencies, and is perpetually fascinating. It keeps him from ever being a philosopher in the strictest sense, although his powerful intellect was firm in its grasp of a logical concatenation as it was prone to generalize." (11) In every phase of his life Johnson shows this basic conflict. When he was young he violently attacked the government, and he never does develop a wholly consistent attitude toward it. Even his religion seems to be forced on an essentially skeptical nature.

One of the most startling suggestions of all has been made by Katharine C. Balderston, noted for her scholarly work on Mrs. Thrale's diaries. References by Johnson to padlocks and fetters, and the abject tone of his strange letter in French to Mrs. Thrale while he was a guest in her house lead Miss Balderston to conclude that he had masochistic tendencies. (12) Johnson did not realize the implications of his feelings; he undoubtedly thought of Mrs. Thrale as a pure and noble woman who could help him in some unaccountable way. This explains why Johnson was so upset over the marriage with Piozzi, for he probably felt betrayed by the one person in whom he had confided and in whom he had found relief for his torment. Miss Balderston's circumstantial evidence is interesting but not convincing. Although the tone of the letter written in French is certainly peculiar in its abject submissiveness, the other references to chains and padlocks could be metaphorical, as Walter Jackson Bate has recently pointed out. It is hard to see how there could ever be enough evidence to prove satisfactorily such a claim as the one of masochism.

The best scholarly use of psychology is that made re-

11. "Johnson Agonistes," *Johnson and Boswell: Three Essays*, University of California Publications in English, III (1944), 367.
12. "Johnson's Vile Melancholy," *The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), pp. 3-14.

cently by Bate, who unifies the various aspects of Johnson's life by treating his personality and writings from one point of view: that of Johnson the humanist who struggled to develop his powers to their fullest extent. Bate relates a number of basic themes to the larger concept of the development of human possibilities. (13) Johnson thought of imagination as the desire of the human mind for novelty. Because it is so extensive, the imagination constantly reaches behind and before for stimulation: it looks constantly to the past and future, since it needs either to recapture the memory of old sensations or to anticipate new delights. But too often it gets limited in the present to one particular problem, person, or circumstance. Hence life becomes crippled; for to lead to the fullest development of an individual, the imagination must continually be enlivened by new interests. Since it is an activity, once the imagination is blocked, the mind will turn in upon itself; instead of going to the external world to fulfill itself, it will withdraw and become destructive. The growing mind is one that is continually establishing sympathetic links with the outside world. Yet even if these links are successfully maintained, there must always be the endeavor to enrich the quality of that toward which the imagination directs itself.

These, as Bate sees them, are the basic ideas running through Johnson's life and writings. Around them Bate discusses various specific aspects of Johnson. His guilt, his eccentricities, his fear of insanity and death are all part of a greater underlying fear, that of losing consciousness and the power to direct his own life; for "the final, the most drastic compulsion of Johnson . . . is that of reason itself—the compulsion to be fully and finally aware." (14) And his eccentricities merely emphasize this drive; "the working toward control, toward order and steadiness of pattern, which the scruples and compulsive mannerisms mirror in their own un-

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13. *The Achievement of Samuel Johnson* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955).

14. Page 162.

important but picturesque way, is what gives the marked centripetal character we find in Johnson's thought." (15)

One word of caution should be given in conclusion. Even the best studies that make use of psychology leave a feeling of uneasiness in the reader. The current interest in the subject matter and terminology of psychology can lead to distortion. It is too easy to divorce a literary figure like Johnson from his own period and make him over into a twentieth-century man. The nineteenth century saw Johnson as a jovial bear, ruling English letters from a tavern throne. The present age often pictures him as a lonely neurotic in a hostile world. There is truth in both views, but both are also slanted by the times that produced them.

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15. Page 165.

State Teachers College at Boston

# Aspects of Creativity and the Learning Process

by

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The obstacles to creativity in students of the arts and sciences are the concern of many teachers. Some teachers have been fortunate enough not to have had many obstacles to overcome themselves. Others have been helped by their teachers to greater creativity.

As one of the latter, I have been interested in trying to understand how I've been aided and to make the methods explicit in the process of working with my own students. I'm sure all teachers have experienced the feelings of frustration as promising students give one glimpses of creativity which never matures or is never fully realized. For the purposes of this discussion, I have defined creativity as—that kind of self-expression in one's own medium that results in constant growth and synthesis of experiences essential to the continual production of new and original work.

While I have been primarily concerned with the creativity which produces original thinking in my own specialty of psychiatry, and while my attention to the obstacles to creativity has been centered on my own students who show promise, I've also had the opportunity as a psychotherapist to work with several writers, painters, sculptors and photographers, where these obstacles have been of primary concern in the treatment. My own avocation of photography has widened

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my horizons further and provided additional opportunities to see other teachers in another field try to deal with the same problems in their students.

These efforts to crystallize some of my thoughts of the past few years in writing are the result of reading two papers.

The first is Walter Rosenblum's, "Teaching Photography," published in *Aperture*, Vol. 3, 1956. The second is Irving Sarnoff's, "Some Psychological Problems of the Incipient Artist," published in *Mental Hygiene*, July 1956. Both articles stimulated trains of thought which had not quite crystallized and helped me make these thoughts more explicit. Sarnoff in his paper reviews his experiences as a psychotherapist in a University Health Service with a number of promising students in the arts. He discusses three fears which prevent creativity. The first is the fear of assuming a position of authority which permits the artist to place the stamp of his perceptions on the world. In my own words, this means to accept one's role as a mature adult who can assert his ideas authoritatively and is thus the equal of others in the same field and especially the equal of authoritative persons from one's childhood, one's parents. The second fear is the fear of talent, the anxiety about committing one's self to the unremitting work of developing one's creative capacities, to bearing the frustrations, hard work and responsibility of seeking self-fulfillment.

Sarnoff points out that many young artists are dismayed when they do discover glimpses of their talent. They would rather continue to be promising aspirants in their fields rather than be committed to the development of clearly evidenced talents. The third fear Sarnoff mentions is the fear of inner emptiness or the anxiety that there are few inner resources, that they will soon run dry and leave the artist without any foundation for further work. In Sarnoff's clinical examples, the artistic production is felt as a loss of substance by students who still feel the need for continual gratification from others.

My own point of view on creativity and the hindrances to its realization is in large part the result of training, research, teaching and practice of child psychiatry or more accurately,

family psychiatry. My particular research interest in childhood schizophrenia has both provided opportunities to work with children whose creativity is almost non-existent, whose capacities for learning are stunted, and with their parents who in several instances were talented people with creative potential never fully realized. It was in such a setting that the problems around creativity, and the inhibiting factors which result from the child's experiences with the adults in his life became vivid to me.

Perhaps the conflict most evident in the schizophrenic child can be seen in his very attitude, the stiff awkward movements, the frozen demeanor, the paucity of speech and the general inhibition of emotion except for destructive rages. As one works with such children and their parents, one becomes aware of the dove-tailing conflicts in the parents about their unconscious need to repress many feelings. Conscious and verbal awareness of feelings gives one the conscious choice about how any feelings could be expressed non-destructively. These parents feel it dangerous to experience freely and fully many emotions. One usually learns that in their childhood such feelings as anger, hate, acute disappointment, child-like feelings of wanting to be cuddled as well as sensual and sexual feelings were forbidden verbal expressions. From some parents we learned that such suppression aroused much anxiety since there was always increased possibility of imminent discharge of these feelings into destructive or forbidden behavior. One parent described the feeling as "sitting on a powder keg of feelings." Thus these parents who were talented and even successful in earning their living in graphic arts, writing, etc., were usually unable to consciously feel emotions so that their work failed to breathe of life. They tended to do acceptable, fairly stereotyped, not very imaginative work from which they made their livelihood. In their therapy they described the absence of feelings of self-fulfillment. In the course of psychotherapeutic work with both the children and their parents, it became clear that the unconscious conflicts which result in repression of feelings consumed a tremendous amount of energy. Thus

they were constantly fatigued, their productivity was reduced and even their perceptivity was markedly diminished.

Obviously there are many other aspects of conflict which inhibit creativity and were evidenced in these children and their parents. Another aspect of the conflicts which resulted in the massive inhibition of feeling were those conflicts which centered around learning. In the child, often learning such things as self-care and later learning in school was markedly inhibited. All aspects of learning at every developmental stage can be viewed as preparation for the fullest living and learning in the next stage of development. Thus as an adult one functions as an individual with other persons but is not parasitically dependent upon them for one's being able to live. The schizophrenic child especially evidences a great fear about learning. Learning seems to mean to him to "grow up," that is, to cease being a helplessly dependent child and thus to preclude forever obtaining the gratifications he has not yet received. It is clear that in this area these children have not had the experience of participating with their parents in the mutual pleasures of infancy around feeding, daily care, playing and learning. The parental conflicts reduced markedly the parents' tender assistance to the infant and child in learning and in physical and emotional development. These conflicts resulting from their own unmet needs in childhood greatly diminish the parents' enjoyment and thus their ability to behave as parents with their child. In their living as adults some of these parents seek satisfactions from other adults, not as co-equals, but as helpless dependent children whose needs often must be met, so that they can continue to function as adults in other aspects of their living. Thus when parents have not been helped by their own parents to mature through their childhood experiences they are not free to explore the resources both within themselves and in the world around them. They are inhibited and restricted by their conflicts from childhood, from freedom in thinking and feeling. To both the parents and the child independence continues to portend the loss of satisfactions from others.

These observations are similar to those described by

Sarnoff in his art student patients. The three fears of assuming a position of authority, committing oneself to the development of one's talent and anxiety that one will be drained dry by each piece of work, can be understood in terms of conflicts resulting from early life experiences with conflictful parents. Quantitatively these conflicts are less severe in most art students than they are in schizophrenic children or their parents. I'm convinced that qualitatively they are similar. Thus conflicts stemming from the oral stage of psychosexual development, from experiences with tense and conflictful mothers are reflected in the constant yearning for gratification from someone and an inability to find satisfaction in one's own work. Coupled with this are those conflicts from later stages of development where the child has not been helped to enjoy learning and mastery of his environmental tasks through perseverance. He therefore feels constant frustration and inability to complete his work. When he does come close to finishing a piece of work, he risks again the loss of sustenance from others if he is successful and the anxiety of successfully competing with his parent which stems from unresolved oedipal conflicts.

For many potentially creative people, only prolonged psychotherapeutic work will give them the necessary personal experience, that their own work can be satisfying, that they do not lose gratification from others in the process and that their parents continue to survive and even enjoy their success.

The following three brief case histories illustrate the increased freedom and creativity which may result from the resolution of some conflicts through psychotherapy. The first case concerns an adult whose conflicts inhibited his creative work but did not obliterate it. The second case describes work with the mother of a schizophrenic boy. Her intense conflicts were responsible at least in part for her schizophrenic child and certainly for her markedly diminished creativity. The third case summarizes psychotherapeutic work with a schizophrenic child who was gradually helped to greater freedom as he was helped to learn.

**CASE #1:-**

A successful commercial photographer consulted me because of recurrent tension headaches, continuous feelings of hate and anger with frequent explosive rages which just stopped short of physical violence. His feelings and behavior inhibited his effectiveness with clients, his relations with co-workers, and threatened his marriage. The recurrent severe headaches and a constant tired feeling also markedly reduced his productivity and each job was completed with great effort. Since he was aware of my interest in photography he occasionally brought in examples of his work. These were invariably well thought out, meticulously executed advertising photographs of the same caliber as those found in current magazines. It was only after many months of work together that he began to describe his impulses in each job to make photographs which expressed more fully his ideas and feelings. At such times he experienced massive anxiety. He felt that such departures from the usual commercial work would be deprecated and rejected by his clients and thus might call forth his uncontrollable rages. He felt safest although tense, unhappy, discontented and unfulfilled when he made the "slick, run-of-the-mill" photographs. At such times he also had severe and almost intractable headaches. During this period of our work, he began to bring in occasional "Sunday" photographs. These gave hints of his creative ideas and feelings, but they gave me a sense of being inhibited and restricted as if on Sundays he were trying desperately to make up for his week-day dissatisfactions. My patient expressed his continued dissatisfactions with these pictures too. In addition, it became clear that Sunday photography added to the tensions of his already strained relationship with his wife. In time he began to work through some of his problems which centered around his very prosperous and domineering father, who, although financially successful, failed to achieve the eminence and recognition

he felt was due him for his professional achievement. His father violently disapproved of his early leanings towards art and of his eventual decision to seek training in photography. My patient had vivid memories of the many times in childhood that he brought his pictures to his parents only to face his father's scorn and ridicule and his mother's extravagant praises and idolization. These conflicting attitudes and their effect on him were a recurring theme in our work. Gradually he was able to dissociate his clients from his feelings about his parents, his fear of their scorn, hope for their adulation and praise. At the same time he began to see his wife in a new perspective. He saw her originally as the person he hoped would sustain him with admiration, uncritical praise and constant attention to his needs. Thus her often valid and constructive evaluations of his work my patient felt as his father's scorn and deprecation. When she voiced her needs in their relationship he could only feel hate and rage at being asked to "give" when he was in such dire need himself.

In time he began, first in a few instances, to present clients with both the standard photographs and those which expressed his own creative ideas. To his surprise and satisfaction, a few clients preferred his creative ideas. Thus encouraged he began to present more freely his own ideas, to follow his own creative urges with increasing success and contentment. His relationship with his wife improved, his headaches were markedly reduced and his rages were more and more infrequent. The "Sunday" photographs he brought reflected his increasing freedom of seeing and feeling.

As my patient gained more perspective about himself as an adult and felt easier about himself and his relations with people, he was able to show his father some of the photographs which were most satisfying to him. To his surprise his father expressed admiration and appreciation of the work he was able to do.

**CASE #2:-**

A thirty-five year old art teacher, the mother of a twelve year old schizophrenic boy patient of mine sought treatment for herself after I had worked with her son about a year. She had begun to notice that her son was becoming less frozen and that on a few occasions he evidenced a kind of spontaneity which was new to him. In each instance she had suddenly felt that she rarely experienced such spontaneity herself. The past 12 years teaching art in high schools and making extra money by illustrating children's books had left her feeling constantly dissatisfied with herself. An unhappy marriage and subsequent divorce when her son was age five resulted in her having to care for her child by herself. She solved this by living with her parents who took care of him. In this household of rigid, reserved and isolated elderly grandparents, the boy became increasingly withdrawn. Mother spent little time at home. He did fairly well in school and was not a behavior problem either at school or at home. Thus no one was concerned until at age ten when he began to talk about feeling strange. He was not sure his hands or feet belonged to him, his head felt enormous and felt as if it were about to float away. He described odd sensations of being encased in cotton. He also saw people as having large heads and felt he was being looked at by everyone.

In the course of the boy's first year of work with me, these bizarre symptoms abated and he became more sociable, made a few friends and his school work improved markedly. Mother said she occasionally noticed an animation which was new to him and which she realized she had never experienced herself.

During the three years of weekly interviews, mother would bring in her paintings. She had discovered that when she was anxious, depressed, full of rage or of yearning, that in painting she found at least temporary relief. Mother's professional painting had always been

objective and representational. She enjoyed mostly the precise, detailed illustrations she made for children's books. Her first paintings disturbed and delighted her. They were the first non-objective paintings she had ever done. They were very precise, tidy, well-balanced triangles, circles, squares in pastel colors. She interpreted them as expressing her feelings of fury at her husband and parents. Gradually these paintings became less precise, freer. There was more movement, tensions were more clearly expressed in intense, vibrant colors and in less constricted form.

She began to work through some of her rage, first at her husband whose demands that he be taken care of and catered to created so much rage that she had little feeling for her infant. She was only glad he was such a good quiet baby who seemed to accept without complaint the succession of housekeepers who cared for him while mother and father continued to work. After her divorce she found herself still tied to her parents and son and unable to find friends, resenting her teaching and fearful of men. Her sexual experiences found her cold and resenting another demand from her husband.

During this period she painted many vivid, violent pictures but the forms were still geometric. Later she began to work through many of her childhood experiences, especially her own acute affectional deprivation. Her mother was unable to give or receive affection or permit any display of emotion. Father was only slightly less restricted. Early her talents in dancing and her beauty led her mother to enroll her in dancing school. Her mother kept her practicing and performing so that she had almost no playmates and few childhood activities. My patient's interest in art was in part at least a rebellion at mother's demands that she continue her dancing.

During the period her paintings lost all of their precise qualities and both form and color were used freely without constriction. She found herself delighted

with her increasing freedom.

At the end of the second year of therapy, she gave up her teaching to spend full time in illustrating and painting. Oddly enough as her oil paintings became freer, her illustrations became rather fragile and exquisite, but there was much more emotion expressed. For the first time too she was able to draw animals in whom one could get a sense of movement and character. Her illustrating became so successful that she was able to live comfortably and to find time for painting regularly. In her last year of therapy she found herself with many friends, several men friends proposed marriage, and an affair with one of them found her enjoying sex for the first time in her life. During this period too she was able to take her son to live with her and found the relationship at times difficult, but quite congenial. She also began to take classes in modern dance and was delighted with a new-found freedom of movement and balance unknown to her since pre-adolescence when she gave up ballet.

Her work with me ended after three years when she moved to another state to accept a better job in illustration. By that time her oils had aroused favorable comments from several art critics. She had had a one-man show which had been successful and her paintings were beginning to sell. I have seen her and her son almost every year. They both continue to do well and mother has engaged in several relationships with men all of them sexually satisfying but they end because mother seems to select men who are not able to live with her in her intellectual and artistic world. Her son now in his late teens has exhibited considerable talent in writing and is about to matriculate in the School of Journalism in their state college.

#### CASE #3:-

Barney, at age four, was a stiff, tense boy with a stony expressionless face. Since the birth of a baby sis-

ter at age two and one-half, he had stopped saying the few words he knew. Since that time too, his silent withdrawn behavior alternated with destructive rages during which he broke and tore any household articles within reach. He attacked his baby sister and his mother whenever he was near them. He was better behaved with his father, but he remained stiff and isolated from him. Father was a precise, dapper industrial designer who wanted everything spic and span. He deprecated his wife's helplessness in care of the home and adroitly managed all the household accounts and the household help, decorated the home and even planned the menus. The mother was a pretty, child-like woman whose helpless appearance seemed to get others to do everything for her. She related in treatment her great fear of men and boys, especially their genitals. She had left this child almost entirely to the care of nurses since his birth. At the birth of a girl, the mother came to life and found herself able to nurse and care for the baby where this had been impossible with her son. She made every effort to have her son cared for by the maids.

In the three times weekly sessions, Barney was at first either completely isolated, standing or sitting staring into space, or in a screaming, kicking rage because he had been brought to the playroom against his will. After the first few weeks he responded to my rolling the toy cars in his direction by tentatively rolling them back to me.

After three months of such tentative contacts, he reacted to my continual naming of each toy I picked up or used by whispering the names of a few toys after me. Shortly thereafter, he accepted my suggestion that his rage at being brought down to the interview against his will could be expressed by hitting the pegs on the pounding board. After a few tentative swipes my encouraging vocal "slam bang!" seemed to make it possible for him to begin to hit the pegs harder until he was smashing them and yelling, "Slam!", "Bang!" at

the top of his lungs. This was the turning point in our work as he began to repeat more words after me and to want to learn to do things. He began to build with blocks, after I used his hands to show him how. Later I drew with chalk, crayons and finger paints using his hands first until very slowly he took over and began to use the materials, at first in a restricted, cramped fashion and finally with freedom. One day as he was crayoning indifferently he looked at the piece of clay I had picked up and was molding into an animal. I had been doing this for weeks during those periods in our interviews when Barney would cease his activities and would look blankly and vaguely around him. This was done in preparation for the moment when he might want to use this material as a means of self-expression and working out his problems. By this time he said my name, used nouns freely but no pronouns and only a few verbs. On this day while absently drawing with crayons and mechanically making heavily crayoned strips of blue, red and brown, he suddenly put out his hand for the clay in my hand. I put the partially completed cat in his hand, he looked at it intently and then looking guardedly at me, he crushed it into a ball. I suggested we try to make a cat together and he looked sullen and angry, shook his head, pinched and worked the clay a bit, looked at the shapeless mass and angrily threw it down. I picked it up, began to work it as he looked at me, and carefully drew one end of the clay into a snout. I took another piece and asked him if he would like me to show him how to do this. He stood rigidly but permitted me to put the clay into his limp hands, and to use his hands to slowly make a snout. It appeared as if his hands and body did not belong to each other, his eyes and face evidenced no interest in what his limp hands were doing. In this fashion we made five or six snouts until I felt his hands come alive in mine. I relaxed my hands, still surrounding his, as he fashioned a very good snout. For the first time his eyes seemed

to see what was going on. After another snout he removed his hands from mine and made several, each one better than the next. This began not only the use of clay and his very skillfully learning to make clay animals, but also the making of human figures. He later began to talk and play out conflicts in the form of phantasies with his mother, father and baby sister. This process of making it possible for Barney to learn, helping him to learn by doing things with him until he was free to do them alone, was paralleled in the home environment where slowly he was helped to learn self care, dressing of himself, eating and finally after almost two years, some reading. This boy, at the end of two years, evidenced much talent in handling art materials. His increasing freedom and pleasure in his activities were delightful to see. These were mirrored in all phases of his living as he finally entered school and engaged in games and school activities with other children. He began to express himself with ease verbally and after a time to use "I" and "me" correctly instead of referring to himself by "you" as he had done when he began to talk. In the last months of our work together, he would sometimes ask me to make the same clay animal that he was making. When mine turned out not to be as good as his, he would deftly show me how it could be improved. On those occasions when my clay animal was better than his, he'd cluck and nod approvingly and try to reshape his own so that it would be better.

### THE TEACHER'S ROLE

How then can the teacher help those students who show promise of creativity and to some degree and in various proportions, some of the inhibiting factors just mentioned. First, the teacher must be aware that he may not be able to be very helpful to some students no matter how hard he tries. Their obstacles to creativity are of such degree that another kind

of help, as just illustrated, may be necessary. But he could be of much assistance to many students.

Walter Rosenblum in his beautiful article gives a clear example of how a teacher may behave in such a way with his pupils so that they identify with his attitudes towards his work, and towards life. It is both through the process of identification and the teacher's consistent help to the student in achieving mastery of the subject that new learning occurs and some of the old conflicts and fears are somewhat resolved. To quote Rosenblum, "Through past experience I have learned that the teacher cannot push, he cannot provide pat answers, he cannot anticipate problems before they arise, . . . The guidance must be gentle and never hurrying. This development can only proceed under self-propulsion."

Here, I feel, Rosenblum is saying that he is behaving with his students not as their parents may have, parents who want the child to succeed for the sake of the parents' own lack of achievement to make up for their own frustrations. The parents, in living through the child, may prevent the child from developing his resources for his own satisfactions. Thus the patience, the lack of an attitude which says I know all the answers, helps the student gradually to begin to find them within himself and for himself.

Rosenblum's emphasis on helping the student to become aware of the emotional impact of his environment bespeaks of his own freedom to react freely without shame with his own feelings to everything about him. He thus provides a model for the student groping toward self-expression.

I'm particularly struck by the succinct and beautiful way in which Rosenblum points to the heart of the teaching relationship. That is, helping the photography student become consciously aware of his world. The emphasis on conscious awareness is indeed the touchstone as he points out. "The word conscious is the key word, for if his feelings remain on an unconscious level, it then becomes impossible for him to grow, on the basis of his past experience." Rosenblum thus makes the effort to help the student *verbalize* his feelings, hunches, and ideas. I'm certain that Rosenblum himself

must give evidence to his students that it can be done and thus help them to feel free to put into words nebulous feelings, ideas, presentiments until they become crystallized. The atmosphere provided by the teacher must make this possible. In addition, the teacher must provide a model for the student in terms of what can be done by this means. He must himself be a creative practitioner of his art. The atmosphere of respect for the individual humanness and potentialities of his pupils is an absolutely essential ingredient of the teacher's attitudes. This attitude is implicit in the writings of Rosenblum.

I had a recent experience with another great artist and teacher of photography which further crystallized my thinking about the teacher's role. In a recent workshop with Ansel Adams, the students were of varied capabilities, talent, maturity and even basic photographic knowledge. My own first feeling was how much could be done with so variegated a group. I was interested to see that Adams' belief that they could all be helped no matter where they were in their development to take a further step, this basic respect for the individual and his potential was perceived by everyone and was an important factor in promoting their learning of material difficult for many to grasp. The attendant enthusiasm and endless patience, a willingness to repeat material, to give examples until the student was clear, were also factors important to the student's learning. Another important factor was the completely honest but gentle criticism of the student's work. Helping the student face the reality of his present state of development and the work necessary to proceed to realize one's self further is an absolute essential in freeing students to be more creative. They are helped to divorce themselves from pretences and self-deceptions which permit them to go on without self-realization. Such self-deceptions have often been fostered by parents, husbands or wives who themselves have never been able to face the realities of both their present accomplishments and the work necessary to really satisfy themselves. Such parents often dissemble with their children about their school work, art, writing, music,

etc., fearing to hurt the child. They are aware of how they too would feel if the actual truth about their own accomplishments were told them and a course of work laid out. Parents who have not learned to work for themselves regularly and persistently can't believe that it can be done by others and they often know of no solution but unreal deception of the child. Thus the teacher who has achieved his creative stature by just such regular, persistent work and self-exploration can honestly face the student with his present status. He can at the same time express his confidence in the student's potential and his readiness to be of help. His own example that it can be done is a vital factor in the learning of the student.

The teacher's attention to all the small and seemingly minute details of the student's work is often protested against and felt as unfair by the student. He often believes the teacher is failing to recognize the worth of the idea or general concept. However, such attention to small details, the teacher knows, is essential for the student's complete mastery of his medium and his self-mastery. Sloppy work, unfinished details bespeak of the old conflicts about doing work with all one's energies and to one's own complete satisfaction. It indicates the tendency to start many times with ideas which are then left in a state of incomplete fruition. The student may thus deceive himself and others about the worth of the work. The readiness to do a complete piece of work also bespeaks of one's readiness to do the work alone without the overseeing of a teacher or parent which is a final evidence of creative maturity.

The meticulous attention to small details, even of matting a print, and the lighting of a finished photograph by a master like Adams was a constant source of wonderment and delight to many of his pupils.

The process of learning through identification is basic to all learning. The child begins to learn through the identification with his parents' attitude. The student learns much through his identification with his teacher. Such learning when coupled with the complete mastery of subject material

is not imitation, it is the integration of attitudes about the self, about how one finds self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment, it is the integration of a philosophy of growth and creativity which permits one to explore one's own potential rather than imitate others. One can often see in the students the attitudes of the teachers. Thus in the issue of *Aperture* in which Rosenblum's article appeared, there was another article with similar breath of approach to the philosophy, teaching and learning of photography and I was not surprised to find that the author was a student of Rosenblum's. Although I know Minor White (the Assistant Curator of Eastman House) only through his photographs and writing, I have often been able to guess correctly who his students were because their attitudes revealed in their work conveyed some of his general philosophy toward life and toward creative seeing. This is true of students of Ansel Adams who give evidence of a particular kind of perception, perhaps best described in their efforts to unify the elements in a photograph to present a beautiful and cohesive whole whether the subject be macrocosmic or microcosmic in nature. They also have the same basic respect for people and their work. It is also true for the student of my own teacher and I hope of my own students. In conclusion I'd like to quote from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran a quotation we inscribed in a compilation of my teacher's writings presented to him at an anniversary of his work with us. "The teacher . . . if he be indeed wise, does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind."

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# Psychoanalysis in Groups: The Alternate Session\*

by

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The alternate session is one of the most controversial innovations in group psychotherapy. It was first introduced by Alexander Wolf in 1938. It is the scheduled meeting of the members of a therapeutic group without the presence of the analyst, such sessions alternating with regular sessions when he is present. The therapist encourages the group to meet without him once or twice a week, usually in the homes of the various patients. They are told that part of getting well requires that they meet at regular intervals without him. They are not instructed to carry on the analytic process. Nevertheless, the alternate session frequently becomes an extension of the regular session. Although opposition to group therapy as such has diminished considerably since the Second World War, resistance to the alternate session is still vigorous.

The purpose of the alternate meeting is to facilitate emotional interaction in the absence of the analyst. Many patients seem freer to interact when authority transferences are less oppressive. Projections developing at the alternate session are attenuated by peer realities. Often when the therapist is absent, it is easier for a withdrawn patient to attach himself or a dependent person to relate to a "peer-authority" in the figure of a co-patient.

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The alternate session provides an opportunity for the patient to be helped by his peers and to exercise, as well, a constructive role as helper. Increased amounts and new forms of healthy and unhealthy material emerge, and an opportunity is afforded to compare the functioning of the individual in different settings. Comparison is the basis of all analysis, as for example, when we compare fantasy and reality enabling the patient to choose reality.

The regular and alternate meetings together become a special field for the discrimination of behavioral differences. The two settings permit us to confront the patient with disparities in thinking, feeling and acting in the authority's presence and absence. By comparing the differences in conduct and analyzing the transferences involved, the patient is able to work through to a more complete and free experience in both settings. The struggle for a more realistic perception of oneself and of others requires the scrutiny of differences.

Moreover, feelings about the therapist are often brought to the surface at alternate sessions and then revealed with group support at regular sessions. The relatively less inhibited climate of the alternate session may provoke intense responses to the analyst. The meeting unattended by him can hasten the uncovering of repressed material.

In the absence of the analyst, the patient can be less selective about what he says and he functions in a healthier or more pathological fashion. The therapist, on the other hand, counsels the patient to make appropriate associations, as when he asks for associations to parts of a dream. In general, greater focussing and more structuring exist at the regular meeting. The quality of the alternate meeting, however, provides the possibility of greater initiative for exploring new dimensions.

Inter-communication among peers and with authorities is facilitated in the therapeutic arrangement that includes the alternate session. Since members interact with one another in their homes and bring new relevant material into the therapeutic experience, it approximates life more closely. The alternate meeting provides, therefore, a basis for transition

and a preparation for successful termination.

Not to permit the alternate meeting circumscribes the examination of actual and illusory attitudes among patients in both peer and authority directions. By denying a group the right to meet without him, the analyst reinforces hierarchical difficulties and restricts peer interaction. The patient is forced to relate primarily to the therapist. The extent of interaction and intercommunication with peers is curtailed. Interpersonal interaction is quantitatively increased and qualitatively different when the therapist is not present. The addition of the alternate session, then, facilitates the working through of peer and authority problems and emphasizes intercommunication rather than intra-communication.

We shall now attempt to formulate and to respond to the major objections to the alternate session.

A primary criticism of the alternate meeting and of group therapy as a whole is that acting out is encouraged. It is feared that patients may aggress or sexually exploit each other, and that such activity will ultimately damage the patient and reflect upon the analyst's authority and reputation. Such a therapist seems to be concerned especially with the need to protect patients from one another. He believes they are dangerous to themselves, to the group and to society and, therefore, need to be limited. The alternate meeting with its more permissive climate is assumed to encourage pathological activity. The therapist who forbids the alternate session, does so in the conviction, he says, that he will thereby reduce acting out.

But if patients can get along in the analyst's presence, they can function in his absence. If they can live twenty-three hours a day without him, they can work together a few hours a week without him. The therapist's effectiveness is limited, if his only available intervention is to forbid acting out. He need not forbid it, except in extreme emergency; neither should he encourage it. In the alternate session, limits are established by the healthy aspects of individual egos, by knowledge that what happens there will be reported in regular sessions, by personal frustrations in acting out, by

curbs the group sets upon itself, and by leadership in the group. It is frequently overlooked that, in all patients, self-corrective needs exist which in the first instance propelled them into therapy. To view patients as having no constructive potentials is the deny reality.

A related objection is that in the alternate meeting the therapist forgoes responsibility and leadership because he is not physically present. This is a misconception of the nature of the alternate session and the role of the analyst. He cannot renounce responsibility for what goes on in therapy, an integral part of which is the alternate session. While the alternate session may be the antidote to the traditional detachment and position of omnipotence of the therapist, he cannot be dispensed with altogether.

The alternate session is leaderless only in the sense that the analyst is not physically present. Group members realize their relationship to the therapist. They continue to react to him and try to resolve the hierarchical vector in relation to him by virtue of the support of and interaction with peers. Moreover, some authority always prevails in the group because of the persistence of transference. The recommendation that psychoanalysis in groups include alternate sessions as part of the therapeutic continuum is not a plea for leaderless treatment.

The alternate session is not a therapeutic medium which increasingly confers responsibility on patients, as the analyst gradually surrenders responsibility. The therapist never renounces responsibility so long as patients are in treatment with him. He may surrender control over them but he never relinquishes expertness as the therapist. He forgoes ascendancy over what happens at the alternate meeting but he does not abdicate his accountability and leadership.

Similarly, the patient is no more or less responsible for his behavior at the alternate session than at the regular session. Moreover, the patient must be made increasingly aware of his responsibility for his own behavior rather than assigning the consequences of his pathology to other patients or to the therapist. It is an encouragement to irresponsibility and

irrationality to believe the patient or the therapist is not answerable for his behavior.

Some critics assume that the alternate meeting is contemptuous of authority. Such an assumption really masks a contempt for the value of peers. It is self-deceptive to think that the patient is responsible for his conduct only when the therapist is absent, and that the therapist is responsible for what happens only when he is present. The therapist does not assign leadership functions to patients. One patient is helpful to the next, but the responsibility for leadership is always the analyst's. He cannot deny his expert role, even if he strives irrationally to achieve the status of patient. By leadership we do not mean, however, that all authority, all activity, originates and ends with the therapist.

Critics of the alternate meeting cite socializing as a form of resistance. Such resistive measures do appear, but clinical experience has demonstrated that they can be dealt with effectively. Socializing may be resistive, but it also has constructive values.

Another criticism of the alternate session is that it encourages wild analysis, which is related to such problems as timing, who shall interpret, responsibility, and acting out. It is true that the analyst consciously applies therapy. If a patient tries to do this with other patients, he is in resistance, because he is denying his own affective reactions. He is playing the role of therapist. An occasional assumption of such a role, however, is constructive and helps group members to give and take; but always to do this makes the patient an exploitative, isolated person who does not really interact.

Moreover, interpretation is not the only therapeutic activity, whether offered by the analyst or the less expert patient. But a badly timed, or a misconceived, inappropriately formulated interpretation by a peer can be more easily discarded than one suggested by the therapist. It must not be assumed that the therapist's timing is always good, that his interpretations are always correct.

Some opponents of the alternate session misconceive what patients do with one another as psychoanalysis. If the

role of the therapist and the nature of therapeutic intervention are clearly defined and communicated, then patient-to-patient interaction is never seen as analysis, for it stems from patient-needs. The therapist who fears what patients will say to one another and who must restrict them to a "sterile" environment reflects an overprotective and controlling attitude. It is an historical atavism, long since discarded, to keep patients in analysis isolated and asexual, for such a technique can only fail.

The analyst who views patients as id-dominated, running wild without his supervision and surveillance, fosters their infantilization. He assumes that all patient interaction is always and exclusively pathological. An indiscriminate emphasis by the therapist upon those activities he approves results in a pathological adaptation which resists the resolution of basic authority problems.

The alternate session provides a proving ground for putting into execution new designs for living, new ways of relating. Whatever occurs there becomes more immediately available for further working through. Acting out, should it occur, is no longer done in secrecy but among peers and among projected parents.

The way the therapist perceives the group determines how he uses it. If he sees the group as an extension of himself, he may employ the alternate as well as the regular meeting to confirm his judgments. If he converts it into a forum for his acting out, he may encourage the alternate session for more provocation of unconscious pathology. In this way he may even convert the regular session into an alternate one. If he sees the group as subordinate to him and unable constructively to work together as peers, he will forbid the alternate meeting. If he sees the group as made up of patients who are permitted to relate only to him and if he denies peer interaction, he is doing individual therapy in a group setting, not group therapy. If he sees the group as a medium in which he can detach himself, hide out or voyeuristically observe without being seen, he may sponsor the alternate meet-

ing and evade the evocation and resolution of patients' problems with authority.

In conclusion, psychoanalysis in groups is a harmonious balance between individual and group experiences. The regular session is the core of treatment; but individual sessions are available when really needed, and patients are permitted to get together also when the therapist is not present. The alternate meeting permits, among other things, the exploration of authority and peer interactions, increased intercommunication, and the emergence of new material. It is not a leaderless session. Awareness exists even at the alternate meeting that the patients have therapeutic objectives and are related to the analyst. Healthy and transference authority reactions appear at the alternate session. Should acting out occur, it becomes available sooner for scrutiny and working through.

We have attempted to describe the nature, purpose, dynamics and therapeutic implications of the alternate meeting. We have examined the parameters of authority and peer vectors, multiple reactivities, and inter- and intra-communication. We have suggested how the alternate meeting is integrated into the therapeutic process. We have discussed the inception of and resistance to the session without the analyst. We have considered the dangers of acting out. We have described the nature of leadership in the alternate session.

We are convinced that the alternate session is a happy historical addition to psychoanalysis in groups, as a better way of relating the therapeutic process to the realities of living. The alternate session must not be considered only in terms of unconscious resistances or the utilization of it for pathological purposes on the part of therapist or patients. It is a clinical therapeutic measure contributing significantly to an enlarged view of the nature of healthy human relations.

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